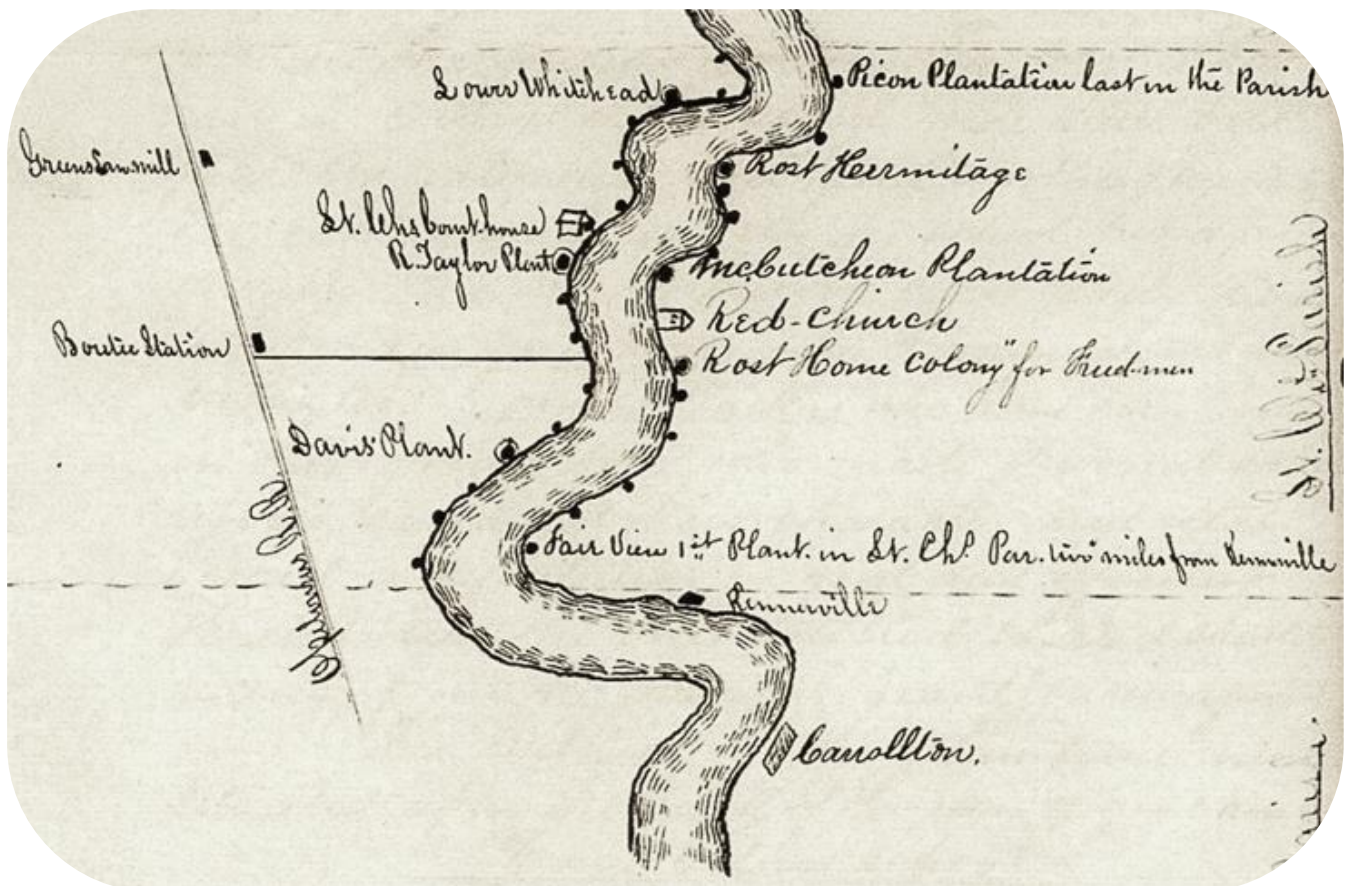


The Rost Home Colony at Destrehan Plantation 1865-1866

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Written by Rachel J. Allemand

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Chapter 1: The Rost Family



Figure 1 Louise Odile Destrehan Rost from the collection of Destrehan Plantation

By 1839, the once large Destrehan family consisting of Jean Noel, his wife Marie Celeste, and their fourteen children had dwindled to three—Nicholas, Celeste (daughter), and Louise Odile. Upon the deaths of Jean Noel and his wife, Destrehan Plantation was purchased by their son Rene Destrehan, daughter Eleonor Zelia Destrehan, and her husband Stephen Henderson. Now they were deceased too.

Louise Odile and her husband were faced with a dilemma. Should they purchase Destrehan Plantation and keep it in the family? They already owned a plantation, Hermitage, in St. Charles Parish that Louise inherited from her first husband, Pierre Edmond Foucher. Louise and Edmond had three children: Destours, Marie Louise, and Jean Edmond.

Five years after the death of her first husband, Louise married a Frenchman by the name of Pierre Adolphe Rost who immigrated to New Orleans in 1816. In 1839, they were raising the three children from her first marriage and four from her marriage to Rost: Nicholas, Lydia, Henri, and Emile. (Another child, Alphonse, was born in 1840.)

After serving in the state legislature in the early 1800's, Pierre Rost was appointed to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Should he add sugar cane planter at Destrehan Plantation to his responsibilities?



Figure 2 Pierre Rost from the collection of Destrehan Plantation

The Rosts decided to purchase the plantation and in 1840 began a major renovation of the 50-year old main house infusing its French Colonial style with many Greek Revival features. The purchase, however, came with conditions as Stephen Henderson, the previous owner, included a multi-year plan in his will for setting his enslaved workers free. Although the will was contested by his heirs, for many years there was a possibility that the enslaved the Rosts purchased might be selected for relocation to Africa. That portion of the will was eventually nullified by the courts.

Judge Rost was considered an authority on scientific planting processes. In 1845, he delivered a speech at the annual exhibition of the State Agricultural Society. Rost's speech was printed in many agricultural journals in this country and Cuba. From 1840 to 1860, sugar cane production increased at Destrehan Plantation. By 1860-61, the plantation produced 760 hogsheads of sugar using a revolutionary refining process invented by a free man of color, Norbert Rillieux. That year Destrehan Plantation had the highest sugar production among the 28 plantations in St. Charles Parish.

Along with the increase in sugar production, the enslaved population at Destrehan Plantation grew to 194 including 84 females between the ages of one year and 60 years and 110 males between the ages of one year and 65 years. In 1866 J. E. Hilary Skinner, an English journalist, reported that Judge Rost had a "better reputation for humanity than most of his neighbors" and the Destrehan Plantation slave houses exceeded the comfort of many homes of English and Irish peasants. However, life for the enslaved at Destrehan Plantation would be considered barbaric by today's standards as evidenced by the journalist's

description of the small chamber behind the plantation hospital where the enslaved were tied and whipped.

Despite their immense wealth, the Rost family suffered like many other families with the frequent epidemics of yellow fever. In 1853, two of the Rost children died of yellow fever at Destrehan Plantation.

With the Civil War on the horizon, Louise and Pierre Rost decided to take their family to Europe in 1861 leaving Destrehan Plantation to be operated by their son-in-law Felix LaRue. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, appointed Pierre Rost as a commissioner to Spain. Calling him “one of our most esteemed and trustworthy citizens”, Jefferson authorized Rost to negotiate on behalf of the Confederacy using the argument that the Confederate states wanted “to maintain their right to rule themselves and to repel the lawless intrusion of others”. Despite numerous attempts to seek recognition for the Confederacy in Spain, Britain, and France, these countries maintained their neutrality during the Civil War.

While the Rost family was in Europe, the Union Army confiscated their plantations in Louisiana and their home in New Orleans. Realizing the futility of his efforts to gain European support for the Confederacy, Rost resigned his commission citing poor health, concerns about the seizure of his Louisiana property by the Union, and the escape of 40-50 of the enslaved from his plantations. In January 1863, Rost wrote letters to Confederate officials asking for financial assistance to travel back to Louisiana. Since General Butler had seized his property in Louisiana and Rost had been expected to personally pay for some of his expenses as a commissioner, he was impoverished. While it is unknown if the Confederacy eventually paid travel expenses for his return to Louisiana, Rost and his family resided in France until the end of the Civil War.

In early 1863 the Union authorities leased Destrehan Plantation and neighboring McCutcheon Plantation to northerners, Brott and Denis. Looking to make a quick profit, the leasees sent most of the sugar cane to the mill rather than keeping some for planting and sold much of the wood that had been on the plantation. While they paid wages and a share of the profits to the enslaved workers, the plantation had deteriorated by the end of 1864, and the lease was cancelled on November 26 of that year.

In January 1865 the Plantation Bureau of the Treasury Department seized the Rost (Destrehan) Plantation for use as a freedmen’s colony. The plantation was selected because it was one of only two in that district having the necessary buildings (i.e., 24 double and 2 single cabins, an overseer’s house and kitchen, a brick store house, 2 picket buildings, one camp kitchen, one hospital, one small stable, one gardener’s house, one carriage house, 2 hay sheds, one ox shed, one large stable, one bone black house, one seed house, one pigeon house, one milk house), saw mill, and livestock.

When Rost and his family returned from Europe, he petitioned President Andrew Johnson for a pardon as part of his efforts to regain control of Destrehan Plantation and his other properties. Following his resignation from the Confederacy on May 18, 1862, Rost took the Amnesty Oath in June 1862 while still living in France. He argued that the Confiscation Act of July 17, 1862 did not apply to him since he pledged his support of the Constitution of the United States prior to that date. In a letter to President Johnson dated December 13, 1865, Rost wrote, “I therefore respectfully ask that . . . the pardon may be granted in such a form as would ensure restoration of my property now held under sequestration by the United States authorities in Louisiana.”

President Andrew Johnson granted Rost's request for a pardon and his properties were returned to him. While he immediately regained his house in New Orleans and Hermitage Plantation in St. Charles Parish, Rost agreed to lease the Home Colony at Destrehan Plantation for one year (until the end of 1866) so that it could continue to house, provide medical care and a school, and employment for the freedmen and their families who resided there. The agreed upon rent was one sixth of the anticipated proceeds from the sale of the sugar, cotton, and molasses for that year or \$15,000, whichever was less.

Head Quarters Bureau of Refugees &c.
State of Louisiana,
New Orleans. Jan'y. 4. 1866

Howard
67
71.

Major Genl. O. O.
Commissioner of Freedmen
Washington D.C.
General

I have the honor to represent that Judge Rost late Confederate Agent in Europe, called upon me yesterday stating that he had received a special Pardon from the President and asking the restoration of his property in this State.

It consists of a house in this City and two plantations. There can be no difficulty about any of this property except one of the plantations known as the "Destrehan plantation" now occupied by us as a home for the old and the helpless Freed people. I do not see how we can possibly give up this property for a year to come. About the time I came here the questions as to the expense and usefulness of our colonies came up. - There were four of them, and the one most nearly self supporting cost \$25,000 more than it produced. It was necessary to do something, and I determined to consolidate them all at one point and the Rost plantation was selected as the one least likely to be restored to its owner and best suited for the purpose.

I put an Officer in charge of it and after some weeks of labor and considerable expense, we are just now established upon it. We have three 000 helpless people and about 120 more or less able to labor. We have moved to the place much property and have procured seed Cane to plant very largely next year.

We have an experienced man employed to conduct the place and he assures us that we may expect from \$50,000 to \$70,000 profit next year if we are not unsuccessful, and we hope that

this will prevent the Colony becoming the tax upon the Govern-
 ment - it must otherwise be.
 If we are broken up here I have no place to remove the Colony
 to and will not have means to support it under these circum-
 stances, I will not restore this estate to Judge Post until I hear
 further from you, and would advise if you can do no better,
 that you allow us to retain it paying such rent as may be thought
 proper.
 The restoration of Judge Post's City property involves the
 breaking up of one of our Schools but I will retain possession
 until the end of January, at which time we expect to suspend
 operations for a time.

most Respectfully,
 Your old Servant

Official: *A. A. General* *Br Major Genl asst. Comr. &c.*
State of Louisiana

Figure 3 Letter to Freedmen's Bureau Director O. O. Howard asking to keep the Rost Home Colony through 1866

Pierre Rost died two years later (September 6, 1868) at the age of 71 due to complications related to diabetes. His wife Louise, died on February 24, 1877 at the age of 75. Ownership of Destrehan Plantation then transferred to their 30-year old son Emile. Emile lived at the plantation until he was in his seventies and in poor health. On October 12, 1910, he sold the plantation to Grace Z. Daneel for \$95,000.

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Chapter 2: The Rost Home Colony

Although the Civil War did not end until 1865, many of the enslaved in southeast Louisiana declared themselves free following Union occupation of New Orleans in April 1862. Life became an even greater struggle as some plantation owners fled to Texas and Europe to avoid the approaching Union forces and crops went unplanted due to the seizure of work animals by the Union and Confederate Armies. Manpower and seed cane were in short supply, and plantation owners were unable to sell their crops due to the northern blockades at major ports. While the price of sugar sank, the cost of purchasing food and other plantation necessities grew. Many of the enslaved arrived in New Orleans with little more than the clothes on their backs. General Benjamin Butler, Commander of the Department Gulf, claimed to be feeding more than ten thousand freedmen who had left the plantations to seek protection by the Union troops. On September 1, 1862, General Benjamin Butler wrote, "The condition of the people here is a very alarming one. They literally come down to starvation."

As the nation struggled with envisioning what freedom would look like for freedmen, Butler and General Nathaniel P. Banks, Butler's successor in December 1862, had a more immediate concern—what to do with the thousands of enslaved people who had sought refuge behind the Union lines in Louisiana. Technically, they were still enslaved. While the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863 proclaimed freedom for the enslaved in the rebellious areas of the Confederacy, it did not apply to St. Charles Parish and 12 other parishes occupied by Union forces.

Butler and Banks devised their own plans for dealing with the idle and destitute runaways. While in some ways their plans were not unlike slavery, this was the beginning of a transition from forced to free labor. Butler put the "contrabands of war" to work on confiscated sugar plantations and as laborers maintaining levees, hauling wood, and

I hasten from the gin now to look over the sugar-house as the steamer goes to New Orleans at 4 o'clock. The sugar harvest will commence in a few days, and in preparing for this the superintendent (whose duties are legion) must see that the sugar gear is in perfect order. Consequently I met here with another band of colored workmen, stuffing pistons, cleaning vacuum pans, making joints, repairing air-pumps, and doing all the cleaning, &c. required by two or three steam-engines and \$60,000 worth of machinery, unemployed for the past four years, or during the war. The polished, bright work reflected the glossy features of a score of cheerful countenances. The sun's rays shone on the burnished iron, and dark forms passed and repassed behind a net-work of metal, and served to form a rare and novel sight to a Northern eye, while the hands worked away among his complicated mass of pipes, cylinders, levers, cooler-valves, &c., &c., with as much activity and intelligence as any other gang of mechanics could do. I was not a little surprised to learn that more than one amongst them was capable of running the whole mill without any white assistance. The consumption of fuel by this establishment (500 cords per month) is something surprising. From the swamp 1,000 cords of cypress wood were cut and hauled before my arrival, and this is another item in the proof, if more were wanting, of the untiring struggle of the freedmen to show their country that they are not the sottish race that their enemies would have us believe them to be. All get rations from Government, which are issued weekly. The contract hands are paid their wages yearly, and are also liberally supplied with clothing, shoes and stockings, which they pay for out of their earnings;

Figure 4 Excerpt from a letter to the editor published in *The Daily Morning Chronicle* on November 20, 1866 describing preparations for the sugar cane harvest at the Rost Home Colony

cooking, washing, and mending for Union officials. When Banks replaced Butler, he maintained a similar plan for freedmen while adding a provision for paying laborers a share of the crop profits at the end of the year in lieu of full monthly wages; allowing wage deductions for fake illnesses, laziness or crime; and prohibiting workers from traveling from one place to another without permission. Despite the labor regulations, some planters refused to pay their workers until they were forced by the military. Many of the northern lessees of plantations that had been confiscated by the Union also deprived the freedmen of their wages leading Thomas W. Conway to declare that "planters from free states were as oppressive as Southerners in their treatment of laborers." Labor relations were further complicated by the attitude of some of the freedmen. In his *Report on the Condition of the Freedmen of the Department of the Gulf for 1864*, Conway wrote that there were "often times serious troubles" due to the "insubordinate, vicious and obstinate" dispositions of freedmen and that these problems were managed by assigning the freedmen to government projects where they labored without pay or received similar punishments as those used in the army and navy.

On March 3, 1865, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands which was known as the Freedmen's Bureau. The bureau was responsible for supervising all matters related to refugees and freedmen and for managing confiscated and abandoned land in the Confederate states. This included issuing rations and clothing, operating hospitals and refugee camps, supervising labor contracts, managing complaints, establishing schools, legalizing marriages for freedmen, and providing transportation for refugees and freedmen. Since few funds were appropriated by Congress, the bureau relied on income from confiscated property, supplies from the army, aid from benevolent societies, and a tax on black adult laborers to provide assistance to the freedmen.

Although the colony maintains over 700 souls all but a few are more or less infirm and helpless, or children. On the few able-bodied devolve, therefore, almost the entire duties of the plantation. Nevertheless such is the desire of all to do something that I found, at the time of my visit, the cotton fields filled with men, women, and children, gathering the produce and lightening their labor with hymns. While their busy hands were securing to many, in imagination, new dresses, hats, boots, or bonnets, others in filling their bags felt that every hundred pounds added would give another greenback to their savings. Meanwhile the steam-engine press and gin were working unceasingly in preparing the results of the pickers' toil for market; and if one's view was confined to this plantation, it would be difficult for him to believe that there was any such thing as idleness in the South. The captain's very intelligent colored overseer told me that up to the day of my arrival they had already gathered seventy-five bales of cotton, and twenty-five more would be added before the plants would be bare or the pickers' occupation gone. Even in the North, a more busy scene of industry I have scarcely witnessed than was exhibited around the gin-house and in the cotton fields of this interesting settlement. Close to the principal building, spread out on great platforms, the white cotton, previous to going to the gin-house, was drying in the hot sun; long lines of women, with huge baskets on their heads, were bringing the staple from the field or carrying to the gin, and as they passed in a long single file they reminded one of the slaves of the "Lamp," carrying the treasures of the mine to the palace of Aladdin. Gangs of the stoutest hands were hoisting, working the press, tying the bales with iron bands, or stowing them in wagons for transmission to the Government warehouses in the "Crescent City," while every one's face betrayed a cheerful willingness that showed his heart was in his work.

Figure 5 Excerpt from a letter to the editor published in *The Daily Morning Chronicle* on November 20, 1866 describing the cotton harvest at the Rost Home Colony

The Freedmen’s Bureau is credited with the establishment of four home colonies in Louisiana (McHatton Colony near Baton Rouge, Sparks Plantation in Jefferson Parish, Bragg Plantation in Lafourche Parish, and Rost Home Colony in Destrehan.) to serve as agricultural collectives and provide services for the helpless, ill, and unemployed. In his final report (July 1, 1865), Rev. Thomas W. Conway reported that there were 452 well and 148 sick dependents living at the Rost Home Colony. The reported acres under cultivation for the government at the home colony were as follows:

- Cotton: 220
- Corn: 550
- Cane: 132
- Ratoon (2nd or 3rd year stubble) Cane: 210
- Garden vegetables: 12

In addition, 180 acres of miscellaneous crops were under cultivation for the freedmen.

On February 1, 1865, the first documented arrivals at the Rost Home Colony were mostly previously enslaved field hands and skilled laborers such as coopers and blacksmiths from Destrehan Plantation along with their families. On average, about 700 freedmen lived at the Rost Home Colony each day.

Residents of the home colony came from other plantations in Louisiana and states such as Mississippi, Arkansas, Virginia, and New York. The residents at the Rost Home Colony ranged from babies such as Henderson Taylor who was “born free” at the colony on February 15, 1865 to the elderly and infirm such as Milly Washington, a woman from Alexandria, Louisiana, who arrived at the colony at the age of 90 on August 21, 1865. While most of the residents at the colony were black, some were white such as Hanson Medley and his mixed-race family (Margaret, wife and four children, Thomas, Amanda, Willis, and Alexander) who left the colony after a few months to return to Florida. A variety of reasons were given for departures from the home colony: went to work, ran away, married, died, wouldn’t work, transferred to New Orleans Asylum, etc. One man, Henry Richardson, who was blind and legless went to New Orleans on a begging excursion and did not return. Ten year old George Clinton went with him to serve as his guide.

The able-bodied over the age of 14 at the home colony were required to work ten hours a day during the summer and nine hours per day in the winter. Saturday afternoons and Sundays were free times. Profits from the sale of the crops went to the United States Treasury. In addition to “just treatment, wholesome rations, comfortable clothing, quarters, fuel, medical attendance, and the opportunity for instruction of children”, laborers were paid as follows:

Hands	First Class	Second Class	Third Class
Male	\$10 per month	\$8 per month	\$6 per month
Female	\$8 per month	\$6 per month	\$5 per month
Boys under 14	\$3 per month		
Girls under 14	\$2 per month		

Wages totaling \$14,000 were paid to freedmen at the Rost Home Colony in 1865.

Record of Applications for Laborers at Rost Home Colony						
No.	Date	Name of Applicant	No. of LABORERS WANTED	FOR WHAT PURPOSE	WHERE	REMARKS
1	Mo. 1	J. B. Lafargues	5	Field hands	Rost Home Colony La	
2	Mo. 5	W. D. Demmech	indefinite	Field hands & labor	Pecan Grove La	
3	Mo. 6	Dominic & John	1	House Serv	Sonnet Plantation	
4	Mo. 7	Holdridge, Poirier & Leveau	16	Field hand	Price Plantation La	1, 2, 3 "blaf"
5	Mo. 8	P. Sonnet	3	Field hands	Sonnet Plantation La	2 "blaf"
6	April 19	F. Moreweck	15	Field labor	J. V. Picou Plantation	1, 2, blaf. St. John Baptist
7	April 19	J. M. Lerch	6	Field labor	Roussel Plantation La	
8	Mo. 19	H. Leval	5	Do	Roussin Plantation La	

Figure 6 Applications for Laborers from the Rost Home Colony

Red Church and plantations such as Pecan Grove, Price, Picou, and Roussel applied to hire field hands and house servants who resided at the Rost Home Colony. By December 4, 1865, workers could choose their employers, but their work contracts had to be approved by a Bureau agent to ensure that the freedmen were being treated fairly by the plantation owners. The standard contract required the plantation owner to pay one half of the wages monthly or quarterly with the remainder to be paid at the termination of the contract year. In addition, good quarters with a separate house for each family, fuel, medical care, a school, and an acre of ground with access to tools and animals for cultivating their own crops were to be provided free of charge. Employers also had to keep on hand and sell, at actual cost, food and clothing for the laborers and their families.

Between January 1, 1866 and October 1, 1866, 398 freedmen contracted to work on 11 plantations in St. Charles Parish. The Freedmen's Bureau also addressed complaints such as those from Roseland Plantation that alleged that a worker did not fulfill the work contract and another had destroyed private property.

Residents at the Rost Home Colony were provided food and clothing. In 1865, the \$21.50 clothing allowance for each man included "two pairs of pants, two pairs of shoes, two pairs of socks, two shirts, a straw hat and a wool hat." The \$27.00

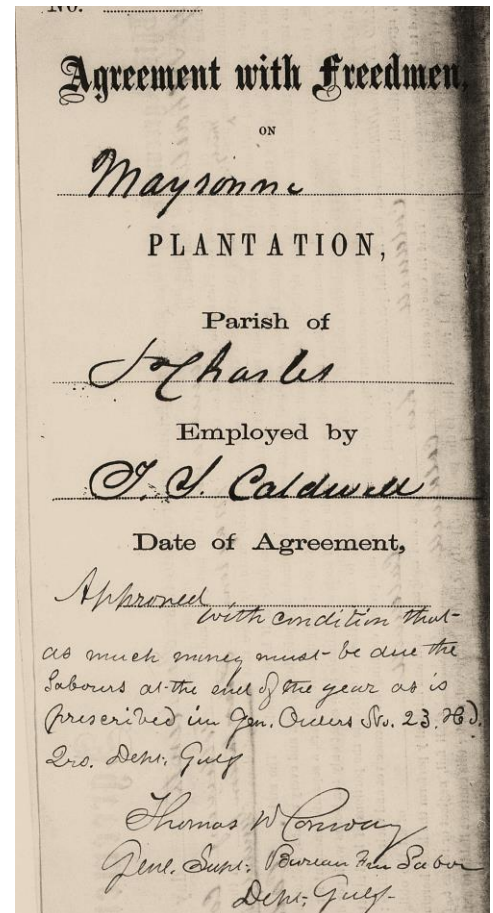


Figure 7 Contract for laborers with Mayronne Plantation in Luling, LA

clothing allowance for women included “three dresses, nine yards of cloth, two pairs of shoes, two pairs of socks, two handkerchiefs, a straw hat, and a sunbonnet.” The following are a few of the many records documenting the issuance of clothing at the Rost Home Colony in 1865.

To Whom Issued	Articles	Value
Boy Wilson	1 woolen shirt	\$1.50
Jacob Jones	1 pair of shoes	\$2.50
John Goosberry	2 pairs of pants, 2 shirts	\$8.00
Nancy Cooper	1 pair of shoes	\$2.50
Ellen Carter	Baby dress and baby chemise	No value given
Charlotte Williams	20 yards of calico	\$7.10

For the month of March 1865, rations for the Rost Home Colony cost \$2,939.58. This included the following:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Pounds</u>
Pork	4,000
Flour	392
Beans	221
Coffee	173
Tea	10
Pepper	10
Corn meal	5,323
White sugar	10
Adamantine candles	10
Soap	224

At the end of 1866, the Rost Home Colony was discontinued and the property returned to Judge Pierre Rost and his wife Louise. The remaining residents at the colony were transferred to other facilities such as the Orphans Home Asylum and a hospital in New Orleans.

Even today, there is disagreement about the overall effectiveness of the Freedman’s Bureau. Many believe that it did not do enough for the freedmen. Others believe that it was overbearing and inflamed relationships between plantation owners and freedmen.

Rost was the only home colony that was considered a success. Although the colony operated at a deficit of \$4,780 in fiscal year 1865, it provided housing, employment, health care, and education for many needy freedmen in Louisiana. By the end of 1866, the home colony reported a profit of \$14,150 as a result of the strategic decision made to plant a large amount of seed cane in 1865 to increase the harvest in 1866 and the leasing of the plantation from Pierre Rost for a year. The money was deposited in the Freedmen’s Savings Bank which had been established to provide a safe place for former slaves to save their money. Some of the proceeds were used to pay teachers’ salaries at the Freedman’s Orphan Home in New Orleans and at one school in Shreveport and one in Franklin, Louisiana. In 1874, the Freedmen’s Savings Bank collapsed due to mismanagement and fraud. In *The Freedmen’s Savings Bank: A Chapter in the Economic History of the Negro Race*, Dr. Walter L. Fleming explained the situation as follows:

It is impossible to say anything with certainty as to what finally became of the money belonging to the colony . . . According to some accounts \$15,000 or more was cleared in 1866 and by order of General Howard this amount was placed in the New Orleans branch to be used for Negro education. But later . . . it was transferred from New Orleans to the Freedmen's Bank in Washington, D. C. Finally, by some trick of bookkeeping it was withdrawn into private hands and disappeared.

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Chapter 3: Enslaved from Destrehan Plantation at the Rost Home Colony

When the Rost Home Colony was established by the Freedmen's Bureau, there were 224 registrants from Destrehan Plantation. Their ages ranged from infants to 95 years and included 107 females and 112 males. Forty children below the age of 14 years were included in the total.

One of the registrants from Destrehan Plantation was Magdeleine (aka Madeline) Jones. Three generations of her family had been enslaved at Destrehan Plantation. Her grandmother, Felix (aka Felisse), was a 25 year old Creole woman purchased by Robert Robin deLogny when he bought Destrehan Plantation in 1782. She worked as a field hand and in her later years as a nurse. Magdeleine's mother, Julienne, was seven years old when the plantation was purchased by Jean Noel Destrehan. Madeline's mother had four children including Fanchon, Jules, Magdeleine, and an unnamed infant. Magdeleine was a field hand for Stephen Henderson and Pierre Rost, subsequent owners of the plantation. Although she was ill during her time at the Rost Home Colony, Magdeleine left the colony and was listed in the 1880 United States Census as being 69 years old, widowed, and living in St. Charles Parish. She suffered from rheumatism and palpitations of the heart.

Another enslaved woman at Destrehan Plantation was Harriet Smith. Harriet's mother, Malinda was bought by Jean Noel Destrehan, second owner of the plantation, when she was a young girl. Malinda was 16 years old when the plantation was purchased by the third owners, Stephen and Zelia Henderson and Rene Destrehan. When Stephen Henderson died, Malinda was 30 years old and married to Harry, an enslaved man at the plantation. He was six years older than Malinda and a field hand. Harriet registered at the Rost Home Colony at the age of 24. She was employed by Capt. O. J. Flagg as a nurse.

One of the families from Destrehan Plantation consisted of Louis Campbell, his wife Jane Campbell, and their children Ellis (age 7), Emeline (age 4), and Delia (age 2) who was born free. Another family included William and Emily Gilbert and their children Martha Ann (age 11) and Wiley (age 3). William had been born in Florida while Emily was born in Virginia. After leaving the Rost Home Colony, the Gilberts lived in the town of Carrollton in Jefferson Parish. According to the 1870 United States Census, William worked as a laborer and Emily as a domestic servant. They also added to their family with the birth of William (then age 3) and Rebecca (age 2). According to the 1880 United States Census, the family lived on Fifth Street in New Orleans. Martha Ann and Wiley were no longer living with the family, but Elijah and Samuel had been born. Three of the children (William, Rebecca, and Elijah) were attending school while their father worked as a gardener and their mother was keeping house.

From the Rost Home Colony, several others from Destrehan Plantation (Corily Brown, Lydia Brown, Mary Ann Brown, Constance Margery, Matilda Davis, Delight Griggs, Hal Griggs) went to Carrollton where there was a federal encampment (Camp Parapet). (Carrollton was the seat of Jefferson Parish, but existed for only thirty years before being annexed by New Orleans.)

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in Carrollton in the County of Efferson, State of La, enumerated by me on the 17 day of June, 1870.
 Post Office: Carrollton J. J. Harris, Ass't Marshal.

1	2	3	4			7	8		10	11		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Age at last birth—If first child, give date of birth in this column. If second child, give date of birth in this column. If third child, give date of birth in this column. If fourth child, give date of birth in this column. If fifth child, give date of birth in this column. If sixth child, give date of birth in this column. If seventh child, give date of birth in this column. If eighth child, give date of birth in this column. If ninth child, give date of birth in this column. If tenth child, give date of birth in this column.	Sex—Males (M.), Females (F.)	Color—White (W.), Black (B.), Indian (I.), Chinese (C.), Japanese (J.), Other (O.)		Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate		Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Father of foreign birth.								
1	207	903	Yangue Hla	40	F	W	Keyp-hoan			Germany	/								
2			Herman Laura	17	F	W				La	/								
3			Mary	11	F	W				La	/								
4			Catherine	9	F	W				La	/								
5			Margaret	3	F	W				La	/								
6	208	904	Herman Jacob	31	M	W	Captain			La	/							/	
7			Odilia	28	F	W	Keyp-hoan			La	/								
8			William	9	M	W				La	/								
9			Edward	7	M	W				La	/								
10			Jacob	4	M	W				La	/								
11			Catherine	2	F	W				La	/								
12	209	905	Kiddle Jos	49	M	W	Labour			Germany	/							/	
13			Mary	47	F	W	Keyp-hoan			La	/								
14			Wm	19	M	W	Labour			La	/								
15			Geo.	17	M	W				La	/								
16	210	906	Marion Ch	48	M	W	Carpenter			La	/							/	
17			Elodie	32	F	W	Keyp-hoan			La	/								
18			Tessant Alf	12	M	W				La	/								
19	211	907	Ray Cornelius	39	M	B	Labour			La	/							/	
20			Lidia	35	F	B	Servant			Maryland	/								
21	212	908	Hanson O	16	F	B	So			La	/								
22			Est Puatia	12	F	B	So			La	/								
23	213	909	Gilbert Wm	42	M	B	Labour			La	/							/	
24			Emilie	41	F	B	Servant			La	/								
25			Martha	17	F	B	So			La	/								
26			Willey	9	M	B				La	/								
27			William	3	M	B				La	/								
28			Rebecca	2	F	B				La	/								

Figure 8 Excerpt from the 1870 United States Census showing the Gilbert family

Sources:

1870 United States Census

1880 United States Census

“Louisiana Freedmen’s Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872,” images, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org>).

Destrehan Plantation Training Manual for Interpreters of History, 2016.

Chapter 4: From Amite County, Mississippi to the Rost Home Colony

In November 1864 the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana was occupied by Federal troops under the leadership of Brigadier General William P. Benton. Along with General Albert L. Lee who was in charge of the cavalry, an expedition was launched against the rebel camps near Liberty, Mississippi which is about 50 miles north east of Baton Rouge in Amite County. Liberty was the headquarters of Confederate General George B. Hodge. After one failed attempt, Federal troops, marching in three different commands, met in Liberty on November 17, 1864 capturing 60 Confederate soldiers, but General Hodge escaped. By November 21st, the troops were headed back to Baton Rouge. A long “train” of soldiers, wagons containing their plunder, and Confederate prisoners stretched out along the road. Behind the troops were hundreds of slaves. A member of one of the regiments described the group of young and old slaves as follows:

These black people fleeing from slavery had appropriated the vehicles of their owners and harnessed them to any kind of animal that they could find; there were stately old family coaches, farm wagons, carts, light and heavy carriages, handcarts and wheelbarrows; some drawn by horses, others by mules, donkeys, oxen and even cows; and were pulled or pushed by men or women. In these vehicles were all kinds of household goods, on top of which were perched colored people of all conditions and shades of complexion from the ebon-hued, flat-nosed Ethiopian to the Caucasian-featured Octoroon. Men, women and children were mounted on the backs of horses and mules and all rode astride; hundreds trotted along on foot, some with bundles, others carrying nothing for worldly goods hurried along, seemingly only anxious to be inside the Union lines and witness the dawn of their “day of jubilee.”

Once inside the Union lines, most former slaves lacked food, homes, and jobs as there was no plan for addressing the needs of freed people. Eventually, as the war came to an end Congress created the Freedmen’s Bureau to assist freed people in making the transition to paid employment but



Figure 9 *Contrabands Coming into Camp at an Unknown Location* Library of Congress

appropriated little funds to support that effort. A home, known as the Rost Home Colony, for freed people was established on Destrehan Plantation primarily to address the needs of the ill and elderly. Three months after the battle in Amite County, Mississippi, 57 former slaves from that area registered at the Rost Home Colony. Twenty-five, with the last name of Bates, had been previously owned by Richard Bates, a wealthy resident of Liberty who had approximately 200 slaves, and one was owned by Burton Bates, a farmer.

In an interview conducted by the WPA in the 1900s, 90 year old Ellen Martin, a former slave of Burton Bates, reported that she went to the same church that the white folks attended and had the same preacher. All slaves had to have a pass to leave the place. She said, "Patterolls were everywhere and dey would beat the ones dat did not have a pass. Marse Bates did not 'low dem down on our place, but we had to has a pass."

The colony residents from Amite County ranged in age from one year to 83 years. Their previous occupations included blacksmiths, field hands, and house servants. While at the colony, many from Amite County were diagnosed with illnesses such as fever, dysentery, pneumonia, ascites, and apoplexy, and sixteen died there. Twelve were employed at other plantations in the area including the Roussell, Price, and Bissell Plantations, and six were reported as running away. One, Louisa Bates, was transferred to the Orphan Asylum in New Orleans.

Sources:

Bates, Ethel Faust, et al. *Mississippi Pioneers: A History of the Bates Family, 1803-1962*. Franklin Press, 1962.

Waud, Alfred R., Artist. *Contrabands coming into camp in consequence of the proclamation*/drawn by Mr. A. R. Waud. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/92501365>.

"Louisiana, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch.org*.

Powell, Susie V. *Source Materials for Mississippi History: Amite County Volume III Part 1, 1936-1939*.

Smith, Thomas West. *The Story of a Cavalry Regiment*. Veteran Association of the Regiment. 1897.

Chapter 5: Illness, Death, and Orphans at the Rost Home Colony

The Freedmen's Bureau provided medical care to freedmen and white refugees at the Rost Home Colony although there was a severe shortage of doctors. The Bureau had seven doctors for the entire state of Louisiana. Five were located at the New Orleans hospital, one was at the Shreveport hospital, and one (Dr. B. W. Pease) was at the Rost Home Colony. For the week ending July 22, 1865, Dr. Pease reported that only 206 of the 510 residents at the Rost Home Colony were not dependent on the bureau and were employed and receiving pay for their work. That week, 40 residents received

medical treatment and 27 of the 30 available beds at the Rost hospital were occupied. In addition to Dr. Pease, the patients were cared for by three female attendants.

By September 1865, the number of beds in the hospital grew to 50 as the Rost Home Colony became the home for destitute and aged freedmen from around the state. From January 1, 1866 to October 31, 1866, 365 men, 376 women, and 315 children received medical treatment at the Rost Home Colony. This included 73 cases of cholera of which 33 died. Overall, deaths in that time period included 28 men, 25 women, and 24 children. By October 1866, the Rost Home Colony had about 711 residents. Five hundred and fifty of those were elderly or young. Five hundred residents were dependent on the Bureau for support.

3rd monthly sick report for the "Rost Home Colony" Co. St. Lch. La. ending Aug. 10th 1865

Diseases	Adults				Children				No. Cases	No. Deaths	Summary
	Male		Female		Male		Female				
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths			
Intermittent Fever	5		5		6		4		18		<i>Remaining last report. Fallen sick. No. treated. No. discharged. No. deaths. Remaining.</i>
Bil. Remitt.	1		2				1		4		
Cholera			1				3		4		
Cholera (acute)	2		1		4		1		8		
Cholera (chron.)	1	1							1	1	
Hemorrhoids	1								1		
Ammonia			2						2		
Ascariasis					3		2		5		
Debility	1	1							1	1	
	11	2	9		13		11		44	2	

*B. W. Pease.
Phys for Rost Home Colony*

Figure 10 A Report of illnesses and deaths at the Rost Home Colony for the period ending on August 10, 1865

Although the Rost Home Colony had one of the seven doctors working for the Freedmen’s Bureau in Louisiana and a 50-bed hospital, more than 100 people died there in 1865-1866. Many of the deaths were attributed to the shortage of medical staff and medicine.

Rosters of the sick and wounded indicated a variety of illnesses, however, the specific causes of death were not usually listed. The most frequent illnesses included diarrhea, dysentery, intestinal worms, rheumatism, intermittent fever, pneumonia, and small pox. Other frequent, but lesser known, illnesses included the following.

Illness	Description	Causes
Ascites	Accumulation of fluid in the peritoneal cavity causing abdominal swelling	Cirrhosis of the liver, cancer
Catarrh	Build up of mucous in an airway or cavity of the body	Immune system reacting to an infection or irritant
Cholera	Watery diarrhea, vomiting, and muscle cramps	Ingestion of food or water contaminated by the bacterium <i>Vibrio cholerae</i>
Dysentery	Diarrhea in which there is blood, pus, and mucous	Bacteria such as <i>E. coli</i> and salmonella
Malaria	Fever, chills, flu-like symptoms	Mosquito-borne parasite
Pthisis	Pulmonary tuberculosis	Trauma, infection, retinal detachment
Rheumatism	Fatigue, joint pain and swelling	An autoimmune condition
Rubeola	Measles	A virus that attacks the respiratory tract and then the rest of the body

Only a few injuries such as sprains and incised wounds that may have been associated with the work being done at the colony were indicated in the registers of sick and wounded.

On December 27, 1866, as the home colony was being closed, twenty-three adults were transferred to the Freedmen’s Hospitals in New Orleans. Six of the adults were identified as blind, two were listed as insane, and others had a variety of diagnoses or no identified illness.

Twenty-four children at the colony were identified as orphans. Fifteen orphans were transferred to the Orphans Home Asylum in New Orleans in December 1866 when the colony was being closed. As the Freedmen’s Bureau prepared to end its work in Louisiana, many orphans were indentured until they reached the age of 15 for girls and 18 for boys.

Indenture for Orphan Children,

This Indenture made the Eighth day of November in the year of our LORD, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Six witnesseth, that I, P. Maj. Guil Meves, Col. 39th U.S. Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Freedmen for State of Louisiana, acting as guardian of William (12 yrs old) an orphan of Eiza Freedmen for and in consideration of the services to be rendered by William to Joseph Gould and also for divers and good causes, hath bound and put the said William as servant to the said Joseph Gould to serve him, his executors and assigns, from the day of the date hereof, for and during the term of Six years years, thence next ensuing, during which term the said William faithfully shall serve and honestly and obediently do all things that a good servant ought to do, and the said Joseph Gould during the said term shall find said William with good and sufficient clothing, board, washing, lodging and schooling. and shall be allowed to attend church once each Sabbath day, and shall receive sixteen (16) weeks schooling each year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the said Joseph Gould hath hereunto set his hand and seal the day and year above written.

Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of

J. Gould
at 124 Poydras St. New Orleans, La
Capt. 4th U.S. Infantry
Pro. Mar. Guil.

By Signature of P. Maj. Guil Meves
Assistant Commissioner Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen
and Abandoned Lands, State of Louisiana.

Capt. 4th U.S. Infantry
Pro. Mar. Guil.

Figure 11 A Contract for an indentured orphan

Sources:

The Freeman's Bureau Online, (<https://www.freedmensbureau.com/louisiana/index.htm>) accessed September 7, 2020.

"Louisiana Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org>).

Chapter 6: Byron W. Pease, Rost Home Colony Doctor

During 1866 the Freedmen's Bureau had an average of seven doctors for the entire state of Louisiana. Five were at the New Orleans hospital, one at the Shreveport hospital, and Dr. Byron W. Pease was assigned at the Rost Home Colony. Despite its small number of doctors, the Bureau undertook the task of providing medical care for the ill and fighting the spread of contagious diseases such as small pox and cholera. Within the first 10 months of 1866, medical care was provided for 1,056 people at the Rost Home Colony.

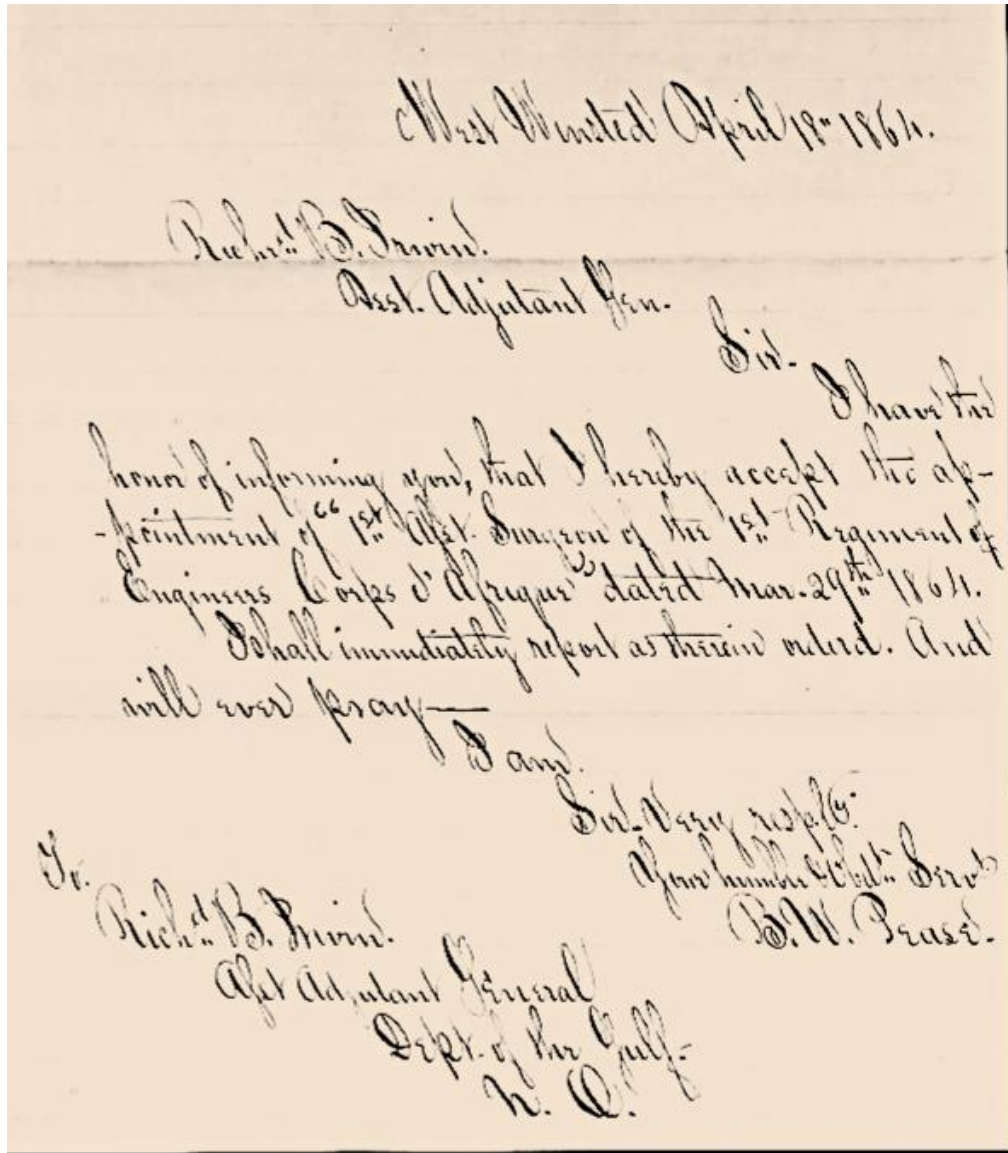


Figure 12 Letter from B. W. Pease accepting the position of 1st Asst. Surgeon of the 1st Regiment of Engineers Corps d'Afrique

On February 4, 1864, Dr. Pease, a native of Connecticut, wrote to Colonel Justin Hodge of the 87th U. S. Colored Infantry asking to be appointed as 2nd Asst. Surgeon in his regiment. Citing the close of lectures at Bellevue Medical College in New York, Dr. Pease reported that he had "taken a full course in military surgery."

At the age of 25, Dr. Pease joined the 95th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry in May

of 1864 in Brownsville, TX. By March of 1865, Dr. Pease was discharged due to an unspecified disability. As a civilian, he was employed as the doctor at the Rost Home Colony.

By 1870, Dr. Pease had relocated to Litchfield, Connecticut where he worked as apothecary. He and his wife, Marion had a one-year old son named Walter. By 1880, a daughter by the name of Jessie was added to the family. Dr. Pease was working as a physician.

Dr. Pease died on June 24, 1902 at the age of 65 and is buried in Litchfield County, Connecticut.

Sources:

1870 United States Census.

1880 United States Census.

Find a Grave.com.

Fold3.com.

"Louisiana, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9G2-VD9X?cc=2333781&wc=STRT-T3D%3A1444308502%2C1444319095> : 20 January 2015), Surgeon in chief (report) > image 23 of 697; citing NARA microfilm publications M1905 and M1483 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

White, H. A. (1970). *The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Chapter 7: Soldiers and Their Families at the Rost Home Colony

Many of the agents (i.e., supervisors) assigned in 1865 were Federal army officers who had served in the Civil War or active army officers. Captain James M. Blanchard, for example, of the 92nd Regiment, United States Colored Infantry, was the Assistant Superintendent at the Rost Home Colony.

Captin Othello J. (O.J.) Flagg

Captain Othello J. (O.J.) Flagg, a 37-year old native of New York, was appointed as a Commissary of Subsistence for the United States Volunteers Commissary Dept. in November 1862. He later served as Superintendent of the Rost Home Colony. His discharge from the army was delayed until January 1867 because he was needed to supervise the cultivation of the crops at the Rost Home Colony.

1866
HEADQUARTERS,
Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands,
STATE OF LOUISIANA.
New Orleans, September 17th 1866.

To the Adjutant General
U. S. Army
Washington D. C.
General,

I have the honor to request that so much of Special Orders, No. 450, current series from War Dept Adj. Genl's Office of September 10th 1866 as musters out Captain O. J. Flagg, Commissary of Subsistence, U. S. Army be amended so as to take effect January 1st 1867.

Captain Flagg is in charge of the "Rost Home Colony", a plantation worked by this Bureau, and on which are a great number of aged and infirm freed people; from which it is expected that a large and valuable crop will be made this year, and to remove him before the crop is matured and gathered would be very detrimental to the interests of the Bureau.

I have the honor to be, General,
Yours respectfully,
Yours obedient servant,
M. W. Davidson
Major General U. S. A.
Dist. Com. for Louisiana.

After the home colony disbanded, O. J. Flagg purchased five arpents of land adjacent to the site of the St. Charles Parish Courthouse. In 1872, the village of Flaggville was developed. Although Flaggville was later included in the present-day town of Hahnville, many local residents still refer to the area near the courthouse by its original name.

Figure 13 Letter asking to delay O. J. Flagg's discharge

In 1900, The Bethlehem Benevolent Society purchased property from O. J. Flagg to build a hall and cemetery where support in the form of medicine, payment of doctor bills, and assistance with burials could be provided for the group's members. The Bethlehem Benevolent Society's building was later moved to Destrehan Plantation where it is being preserved and used as a short-term rental cottage.

O. J. Flagg served on the St. Charles Parish School Board in the early 1870s and was a parish judge. He died in California on December 19, 1913 at the age of 88.



Figure 14 Building formerly owned by the Bethlehem Benevolent Society and now being preserved at Destrehan Plantation



Figure 15 Historical marker along La. Hwy 18 in Hahnville

Pvt. John Goosberry

The foreman at the Rost Home Colony was a black man named John Goosberry. He was hired at an estimated cost of \$62 per month which included wages for himself and his wife (Melinda, age 25) and rations, clothing, and medicine for his family (Susan, age 11; Louisa, age 9; Hannah, age 7, and an unnamed infant, age 8 months). He was also given the use of three acres to work for his own profit (e.g., growing cotton). Goosberry was born in New Orleans but traveled to Canada (probably with the assistance of the underground railroad) where he worked as a sailor in the town of St. Catherines which is about 15 miles west of Niagara Falls. He enlisted in the Union army on July 16, 1863 serving in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the first regiment of northern blacks in the United States armed forces. Goosberry served as a musician (fifer) in Company E and participated in operations in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. When he mustered out of the army, he and his family returned to Louisiana.

Like many freedmen, Goosberry yearned to be a landowner and for a while it appeared that his dream would become a reality although it would be at the expense of the former Confederate plantation owners. The Freedmen's Bureau legislation had authorized the redistribution of 40 acres of confiscated land to each male freedmen and loyal refugee. The land was to be rented for three years and could be purchased at 1860 values within that time span. On September 22, 1865, Goosberry applied for 40 acres at the Rost Home Colony citing assets of one horse, one mule, and \$500 that was due him. Others applying for land at the Rost Home Colony included a group consisting of Willis Ross, 39 other freedmen, 40 women, and 50 children. In their application for 2,000 acres, the group cited assets consisting of 35



Figure 16 *Pvt. John Goosberry, Company E, Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry*

Tintype by unidentified photographer, about 1863. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

mules belonging to the government, 35 plows and harnesses, 2,000 barrels of corn, and \$3,000 in cash. They planned to raise cotton, corn, and sugar cane.

The dream of land ownership was not to be achieved by many freedmen in Louisiana as President Andrew Johnson implemented a process for restoring property to former Confederates after they signed oaths of allegiance to the United States. He believed that this plan for leniency would bring the two sections of the country together. As a result, Goosberry and the other applicants did not receive the requested property at the Rost Home Colony. After receiving a pardon for his role in the Civil War, Pierre Rost and his wife regained ownership of their properties in St. Charles Parish and New Orleans.

Goosberry was discharged from the Rost Home Colony for insubordination and insolent behavior. He relocated to Lockport, New York where he continued his efforts to become a landowner. On August 9, 1875, he wrote to Ulysses S. Grant asking for transportation to government land in Louisiana. In supporting his request, W. H. Baker and others wrote to Grant indicating that Goosberry was “poor and needy” and “willing to work and lend assistance in building up the desert (sic) places in the South”. Soon after these letters were written, Goosberry, who suffered from chronic rheumatism, entered a National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. He died six months later.

The 96th Regiment, United States Colored Infantry

The Louisiana Native Guards, militia units of free people of color raised in New Orleans, were formed in support of the Confederacy. When New Orleans was occupied by Union forces, the Native Guard switched sides in the war and became the *Corps d’Afrique* including both free people of color and freedmen.



Figure 17 *United States Colored Troops of the 2nd Louisiana Regiment attacking the Confederate defensive works at Port Hudson.* Library of Congress

Eventually, as regiments were combined due to casualties, the 2nd Corps d’Afrique Engineers was converted into the 96th Regiment, U. S. Colored Troops which provided security at the Rost Home Colony. When interviewed at the Rost Home Colony in 1865, the soldiers had varying opinions about their service there. While the sergeant was anxious to muster out so that he might earn higher wages another soldier preferred to remain with the regiment because it provided a chance to “learn soldiering” and how to read and write. Originally from Virginia, the soldier had been sold and spent 14 years working on a sugar plantation. He wished to return to Virginia some day.

Iris Cunnigy

On March 29, 1865, twenty-three year old Iris Cunnigy arrived at the Rost Home Colony with her daughter Delia Cunnigy (age 6), Julia Cunnigy (age 4 and sickly), Horace Cunnigy (age 2 and born free) and two “adopted” children (Henry Portor, age 10 and John H. Portor, age 13). Iris was employed at Pecan Grove Plantation, near the Rost Home Colony, where she worked as a field hand for \$.75 per day while Delia and Julia attended school at the plantation.



Figure 18 *Tyrone Plantation main house*
<https://prcno.org/national-register-historic-places-adds-15-new-resources-louisiana/>



Figure 19 *Tyrone Plantation slave cabin*
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=112054>

Iris and the children had been enslaved on a 3,200 acre plantation in Alexandria known as Tyrone Plantation (Alexandria, LA is about 200 miles from Destrehan, LA.) George Mason Graham (1807-1891), a member of a well-known Virginia family, became a co-owner of Tyrone Plantation in 1842. Graham was considered “the father of Louisiana State University” because of his lifelong support of the university that began as the Seminary of Learning near Alexandria.

Approximately 115 enslaved men, women, and children lived and worked on Tyrone Plantation. As one of the many field hands, Iris Cunnigy planted cotton in March and April and weeded the rows throughout the summer. Generally, an enslaved person was expected to work ten acres of land and worked long hours under the watchful eye of an overseer or driver to pick two hundred pounds of cotton per day during the harvest season which lasted from August to early winter.

Tyrone Plantation was devastated by Union troops in 1863-64 when General Nathaniel Banks’ Federal troops burned the plantation’s gin and 600 bales of cotton, stole corncribs full of corn, other foodstuffs,

horses, mules, and oxen, and slaughtered the cattle, hogs, and sheep. Only the main house and some of slave cabins survived. The enslaved fled.

Iris Cunnigy's husband became a soldier in the Civil War. Mrs. Cunnigy was one of four women at the Rost Home Colony whose spouses were soldiers. Others included Charlotte Bickwell and Mary L. Woods from St. James, LA and Mary Miller from Wilkinson County, MS who worked as a laundress at Camp Parapet. Several of the spouses were with Company K of the 80th United States Colored Infantry.



Figure 20 An unidentified Union soldier, his wife, and children Library of Congress

Sources:

1870 United States Census.

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Bombardment of Port Hudson by Admiral Farragut's Fleet Assault of the Second Louisiana Colored Regiment on the Rebel works at Port Hudson, May 27// from a sketch by our special artist. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2003668336>.

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Skinner, J. E. Hilary, "After the Storm; or, Jonathan and his Neighbours in 1865-6" (London: R. Bentley, 1866).

Chapter 8: The School at the Rost Home Colony

When Louisiana was ruled by France and Spain, enslaved people such as blacksmiths, coopers, cabinet makers, and cooks were taught the basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills needed to perform their assigned tasks. The children of affluent Free People of Color attended private academies and Catholic schools and studied under private tutors. As revolutions such as those in the United States, France, and Haiti became more frequent and the abolition movement gained supporters, there was a fear among many free people that teaching the enslaved to read and write made it easier to organize and implement uprisings. In 1830 the State of Louisiana made it illegal to teach the enslaved to read or write, although some owners continued to do so. Following the Civil War, the establishment of schools for freed children and adults was a major responsibility of the Freedmen's Bureau. Many of the freed were eager for their children to learn to read and write.

Under General Nathaniel P. Banks, a board of education for the Department of the Gulf was established in 1864. At that time, there were six schools and six teachers for black children in St. Charles Parish. In June 1865, Thomas W. Conway, who had been appointed assistant commissioner for the Freedmen's Bureau, took charge of the schools. By September 30, 1865, 11 teachers were educating 650 black students at the six schools. This included 65 students between the ages of five and 16 who were taught by Miss Frances Bartlett in the dwelling house at the Rost Home Colony.

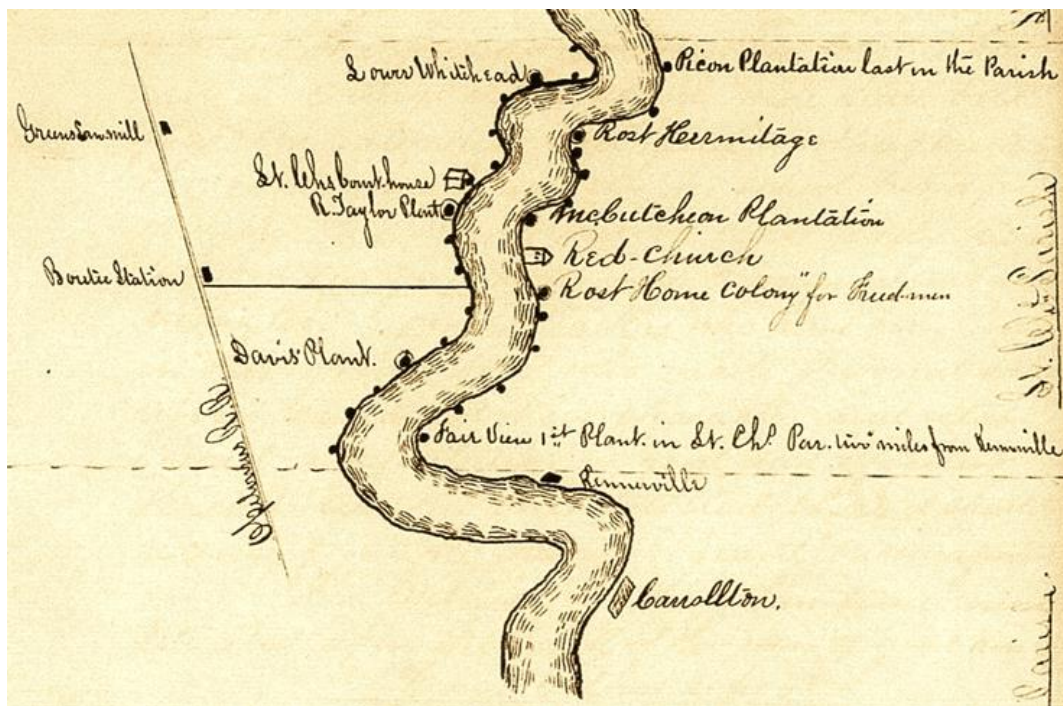


Figure 21 *Locations of schools for black children in St. Charles Parish and recommended school locations (Boutte Station and Fair View Plantation) in 1866 United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872*

Six year old Wilson Crump, Jr. was one of Miss Bartlett's students. In November 1865, his teacher identified Wilson as the "pupil oftenest elected the Good Scholar."

Rost *Parish*
Semi-Monthly Report of *St. Charles* School *Rost*
 of *St. Charles* Parish School Division No. *1* State of Louisiana,
 From the *1st* day of *Nov.* to the *15th* day of *November* 1865.

	PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.		INTERM. DEPARTMENT.		GRAMMAR DEPARTMENT.		EVENING SCHOOL.		AGGREGATE	AGGREGATE of Last Report	TOTAL GAIN	TOTAL LOSS
	CLASS A	CLASS B	CLASS A	CLASS B	CLASS A	CLASS B	CLASS A	CLASS B				
No. of Pupils Enrolled,--	00	40							40	68	00	28
Average Attendance,--	00	29							29	56	00	27
" Absence,-----	00	11							11	11	00	00
Instances of Tardiness,--	00	34							34	107	00	66
No. of Pupils received,--	00	1							1	2	00	1
No. of Pupils dropped,--	6	29							27	4	23	00

REMARKS.

Temporary Transfers with name of Pupils,
 Sec Cir. No. 8, Par. XIII. }

Temporary Suspensions with name of Pupils
 Cir. No. 8, Par. V. 5. }

Substitutes with name, Cir. No. 8, Par. IV. 2. }

Name of Pupil foremost elected the "Good
 Scholar," Cir. No. 8, Par. XI. 4. }

Wilson Crump.

Figure 22 Report submitted by Miss Bartlett, teacher, at the Rost Home Colony

In November 1865, Miss Bartlett reported an enrollment of 40 students citing the discharge of many laborers as the reason for the decline in enrollment. She also anticipated an increase in enrollment as plans were underway to close other home colonies in Louisiana and relocate their residents to the Rost Home Colony. At that time, Miss Bartlett was paid \$60 per month, and the school had been relocated to the sugar house at the Rost Home Colony.

As projected by Miss Bartlett, enrollment in the school at the Rost Home Colony increased to 80 by December 1865. Miss Bartlett had also resigned and was replaced by Miss Agnes Hine.

By January 1866, the McCutcheon Plantation (Ormond Plantation) school had been temporarily consolidated with the one at the Rost Home Colony. Miss Kate Rogers, from McCutcheon Plantation, and Miss Hine were teaching 99 students together in the sugar house at Destrehan Plantation. Since it was not possible to have a fire in the sugar house and the school was crowded, Samuel McCutcheon allowed relocation to a warehouse on the levee near his plantation.

Wilson Crump

Wilson Crump and his family, consisting of his father (also named Wilson Crump), mother (Betsy Crump), and sister (Joanna Crump), were some of the first registrants at the Rost Home Colony. Wilson's mother was born in North Carolina while his father was born in Virginia. Wilson and his sister were born in Louisiana. Records from February 1, 1865 indicated that Wilson's parents were field hands at Destrehan Plantation.

After leaving the home colony, Wilson and his family continued to live in St. Charles Parish. The 1870 United States Census reported his father working as a laborer while his mother kept house, and Wilson and his sister attended school. The family had also grown to include 3 year old Elizabeth Crump. According to the 1880 United States Census, Wilson, then 21 years of age, had married his wife Richael and worked as a laborer while his wife was keeping house. The couple continued to live in St. Charles Parish.

In April 1865, George T. Ruby, a prominent black educator from New York, conducted an inspection of the schools in St. Charles Parish. He reported that there were 865 black children between the ages of five and sixteen living in the parish. There were six schools in operation with 10 teachers. Mr. Ruby recommended the addition of two schools—one at Boutte Station and one at Fairview Plantation--and a male teacher to assist in educating the 130 students enrolled at the Rost Home Colony. He reported that the school at the Rost Home Colony was “doing well.”

In August 1866, the school at the Rost Home Colony had an enrollment of 124, but had been closed for a few weeks due to the illness of students, including three who had contracted cholera.

Sources:

1870 United States Census.

1880 United States Census.

“Louisiana Freedmen’s Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872.” Images. *FamilySearch*. <http://FamilySearch.org> : 14 June 2016. Citing NARA microfilm publications M1905 and M1483. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

Chapter 9: Palmer Elkins, From Slavery to Elkinsville

Palmer Elkins and Emily Evans, field hands at McCutcheon Plantation (currently named Ormond Plantation), were married on May 15, 1861. Palmer was born about 1831, and Emily was born about 1843. While Palmer, Emily and Palmer's father were born in Louisiana, Emily's parents and Palmer's mother were from Virginia. (Following the prohibition of transatlantic slave trading in 1808, the domestic slave trade escalated with many enslaved from Virginia sold to work in the sugar cane fields of Louisiana.)



Figure 23 *McCutcheon (Ormond) Plantation* - Source: *Louisiana Digital Library*

On February 1, 1865, Palmer and Emily Elkins and their children (Adline, age 9; Celia, age 8; Delphine, age 4; and Amanda, age 6 months) were registered at the Rost Home Colony. From the registration records, it appears that they were accompanied by extended family members including Will Elkins, age 44, Margaret Elkins, age 38, and Palmer Elkins, age 3. In May, young Palmer, age 3, contracted roseola and died from the fever and rash.

Palmer Elkins was employed by Capt. O. J. Flagg to chop wood at the Rost Home Colony. He and his family left the Rost Home Colony on November 1, 1866. By 1870, Elkins was working as a laborer while his wife "kept house." Two children, William and Emily, had been added to the family. Daughter Adline, age 15, was at home and daughters Celia, Delphine, and Amanda were enrolled in school.

In 1873, Elkins purchased about 160 acres for \$943.50 at an auction. The land, between River Road and Airline Highway, included First, Second, Third and Fourth Streets in the current town of St. Rose. At that time, the area was known as Elkinsville. By 1880, Elkin's

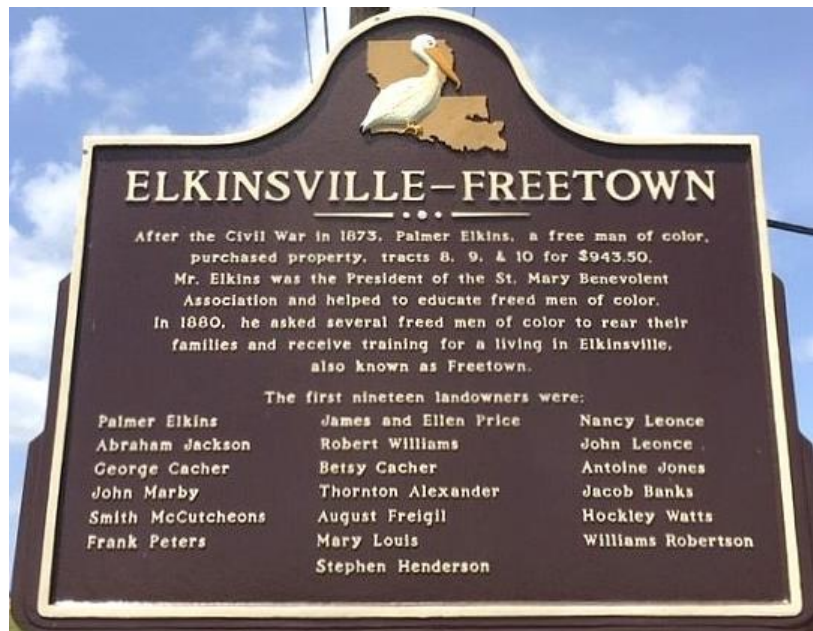


Figure 24 *Historical marker along La. Hwy 48 in St. Rose*

occupation was “minister of gospel” and his wife was “keeping house.” Two more daughters, Leonane, and Isabella, had been born.

In 2016, the St. Charles Parish Government, working in collaboration with the Elkinsville Historical Association, erected a plaque on the Elkinsville site.

Sources:

1870 United States Census.

1880 United States Census.

Elkinsville Plaque along Louisiana Highway 18 in St. Rose, LA.

"Louisiana Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-99G2-F1HN?cc=2333781&wc=STRY-ZJ9%3A1444446224%2C1444446223> : 20 January 2015), Rost Home Colony > Roll 98, Register of arrivals and departures, Feb 1865-Jul 1866 > image 19 of 136; citing NARA microfilm publications M1905 and M1483 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).