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Learning Slavery at Home: Garçonnières and Adolescent Enslavers in Rural Louisiana 1806-1861

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Keywords
Slavery; architectural history; built environment; Louisiana; sexual violence

Abstract
Since Stephanie Camp wrote of the 'rival' geography that enslaved people created on slave labour plantations, few studies outside the field of architectural history have used the built environment as a source to understand the lives of enslaved people and the mindsets of enslavers in the United States. This article takes adolescent outbuildings in Louisiana (garçonnières) as a starting point to understand how white parents taught and reinforced ideas of dominance over both the environment and enslaved people and simultaneously rooted young white sons to a slave labour plantation 'home'. Using architectural evidence, alongside testimony left behind by both enslavers and the enslaved, this article argues that by moving young male enslavers out of the main plantation house and into a separate building, white enslaving parents created a 'risk space' for sexual violence within the sexualised geography of the slave labour plantation. The garçonnière, with its privacy and age- and gender-specificity, constituted just one space of increased risk for enslaved women on Louisiana slave labour plantations from a violence that was manipulated within the built environment.

In the early twentieth century, Judge L. B. Claiborne, who grew up on Glynnwood Plantation in Pointe Coupee Parish before the Civil War, remembered his adolescence spent as part of an enslaving family in Louisiana. "In the early days", he remembered, "there frequently was built a nearby building called a 'garçonnière". The garçonnière, or bachelor's quarters, were "occupied by the family's overly active teenage boys. Parents would sometimes relegate them to the smaller quarters so they would not overly interfere with the lives of other family members".[1] Claiborne's statement

[1] W. Dameron, *Conversations with my Grandfather* (Xlibris, 2011), chapter thirteen. Masculinity as a conceptual tool has been of increased interest to historians of the South since the 1990s, when historians began to use intersectionality to understand the worlds of both black and white men in the South. Historians such as Stephanie McCurry, Craig Thompson Friend, Lorri Glover, Sergio Lussana, and David Doddington have helped to move the field away from the

brings new architectural evidence into the learning of mastery and white enslaving masculinity. In garçonnières the white sons of enslavers lived away from the main enslaver's house, built friendships with men of a similar age, and were quietly shielded from any scandal that might occur through illicit affairs with white women, or sexually violent encounters with enslaved women.[2]

Donatella Mazzoleni has described architecture as "an extension of the body, a way in which the body speaks".[3] According to this notion, physical buildings on slave labour plantations were a tangible representation of the perverse racial ideas and fantasies held by white enslavers. An understanding of garçonnières as uniquely adolescent male spaces in Louisiana slavery is revealing of how male enslavers imagined, learnt, and attempted to enforce their dominance through the built environment. Through looking at these spaces we might boldly, as James Tyner has suggested, "step inside the minds of violent people and try to understand how they perceive the world around them – their spaces and places and how these environments influence their actions".[4] It is impossible to conclude that sexual violence happened in these spaces, but we do know that they were occupied by those members of

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monolithic arguments of Bertram Wyatt-Brown in the 1980s and have approached black and white masculinity from the intersectional perspectives of race and class B. Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behaviour in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Wyatt Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) S. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); C. Thompson Friend and L. Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); S. Lussana, *My Brother Slaves: Friendship, Masculinity and Resistance in the Antebellum South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); D. Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the Old South* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

[2] Garçonnières in Louisiana included in the Historic American Building Survey Collection: Burnside Plantation (Ascension Parish); Barbarra Plantation (St. Charles Parish); Madame John's Legacy 2, Hermann Grima House, Robert A. Grinnan House (all New Orleans); Destrehan (St. Charles Parish). Some structures were not included in this survey, namely because they had been destroyed before the 1930s, or because they were part of the main house. For example, Oakland Plantation is said to have had a garçonnière in the attic of the main house, *National Park Service Historic Structure Report: Oakland Plantation Big House, Cane River Creole National Park* (2004), accessible at archive.org (14 April 2019).

[3] D. Mazzoleni, (1985), translated in A. Berghero, *Intersecting Tango: Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 20018):12.

[4] J. A. Tyner, *Space, Place and Violence: Violence and the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2011), 4.

southern society who were most often identified as perpetrators of sexual violence. The garçonnière reflected, in the words of Mazzoleni, "an extension" of slaveholding adolescence, when the young men were learning mastery, and receiving the freedom to exert this power. In short, it was a portal to becoming a full enslaver-patriarch.

The culture of sexual violence under slavery combined with southern social relations to ensure that, as Lorri Glover has written, 'fathering out-of-wedlock children or molesting slave women was met with tacit acceptance until it generated a public scandal'.[5] New Orleans has received significant attention since the nineteenth century for the interracial sexual relationships that characterised life in the city. Emily Clark, Shannon Lee Dawdy, and Cécile Vidal have researched the Caribbean influences that infiltrated New Orleans, and the mésalliances that commonly occurred in the city.[6] This article, on the other hand, takes the rural plantation 'home' as both a physical and emotional concept as the focus, with a geographic scope that runs from the sugar parishes surrounding New Orleans to the plantations around Natchitoches in northwestern Louisiana. It will include research on both French Creoles and Anglo-Louisianans.

Stephanie Camp noted that enslaved people created a 'rival' geography to the mastery of spaces created by enslavers--alternative ways of viewing slavery's

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[5] L. Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (2011), 115; 126. For discussion of the lack of legal protection afforded to enslaved women and the ways that the state cordoned and subtly encouraged sexual violence against enslaved women see J. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
[6] C. Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans: Empire, Race and the Making of a Slave Society,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (2019); E. Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (2013) ; S. L. Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2008). The term "mésalliance" has been used here to characterise medium- to long-term partnerships between white men and women of colour, previously referred to as 'placage' (a term that was not used in contemporary Louisiana).See K. Aslakson, 'The Quadroon-Placage Myth of Antebellum New Orleans: Anglo-American (Mis)interpretations of a French-Caribbean Phenomenon, *Journal of Social History, 45* (2012) 709-734.

carceral spaces that conflicted with enslavers' ideals and demands.[7] The garçonnière, however, was uniquely a white homosocial space outside of the main enslavers' home. Unlike entertaining spaces in the main house, white women were never present therein, yet the buildings were still attended to by enslaved women. In the context of absolute male power, the buildings confirmed and taught domination of the slave labour plantation space at a time when the young men were affirming their roles as the heirs of mastery.

The wishes that parents had for their heirs are revealed in private letters. In 1836, a gravely ill Suzette Prudhomme Huppe of Natchitoches, Louisiana decided to write a sixteen-page letter of life advice to her only son, Berardin. Her lengthy advice to her nineteen-year-old heir included the words: *"Gard que ta jeunesse ne soit pas trop fougeuse lorsque les passions cherche un prètexte pour ses faibleses…l'honneur doit- être plus cher que ta vié"*. Huppe warned her son against a youth that was too wild and told him that his honor was more valuable than his life.[8] The typical linking of honour with the behaviour of young white Louisianan men in white-authored sources, such as that of Huppe, differs significantly from the descriptions of sexual violence perpetrated by young white men in the testimony of the formerly enslaved. In the 1930s Jacob Aldrich revealed that he was the grandson of his enslaver, Michel Thibedoux, a wealthy Louisiana sugar planter. Aldrich remembered that "Marster would come 'round to de cabins in de quarters. Sometime he go in one and tell de man to go outside and wait 'til he do what he want to do."[9] This behavior was passed on to his son. When the latter became overseer, Aldrich stated he "had as many mulatto chillens as his daddy had. He was my

[7] Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
[8] LSU Special Collections (hereafter LSU), Early Louisiana French Correspondence, Suzette Huppe Letter, Jan 15 1836. Suzette survived this illness, but the diaries of P. Lestan Prudhomme (also LSU) reveal the moment that she learned of Berardin's death in 1850.
[9] For further discussion of women living in sexual slavery, see A. H. Livesey, "Race, Slavery, and the Expression of Sexual Violence in *Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon*, *American Nineteenth Century History*, 19.3: 267-288

uncle".[10] Aldrich added that "[o]ld Missus ain't say nothing 'tall 'bout it. Warn't no use, 'cause he [Michel] was a hard man".[11]

Aldrich's testimony is also revealing of the way that parents in Louisiana raised their children. While Suzette Prudhomme Huppe used the written word to advise her son how to navigate the adolescent life stage, Michel Thibedoux's sons learnt through physical action and example of the power that slaveholding men possessed, whether through management of enslaved people or sexual violence. The complicity of the enslaving mother of white boys is revealed through her silence. Both testimonies, however, aid our understanding of the sexualised and gendered geography of slave labour plantations. Aldrich reveals that even 'black spaces' – such as the cabins of the enslaved – could be cruelly repurposed for sexual violence by white predators, whereas Claiborne reveals that at the time when teenage boys were most likely to become sexually violent they were removed from the gaze of their parents into a place in which they were free to act as they pleased, still surrounded by enslaved servants. Evidence indicates that parents were aware of sexually violent behaviour but did not want it to happen within their direct gaze.

Aldrich's testimony is not unusual for the state of Louisiana – the sons of slaveholders and the lack of protection provided by southern parents against their predatory advances are mentioned regularly in the memories of the formerly enslaved.[12] This evidence, taken alongside the increasingly frequent appearance of the detached garçonnière after the onset of Americanization after 1803, raises questions about how the home can be used as a lens to

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[10] Census records show that Michel Thibedoux lived on the plantation with one of his sons, Lamarque Thibedoux, who was aged 27 in 1860. This is likely to be the young man who was the father of the seven enslaved children mentioned by Aldrich. Lamarque Thibedoux married a white woman in 1872 and had a white daughter. See *Census of 1860*; *Terrebonne, Louisiana*, page: *87*; *Census 1900*; *Saint James, Louisiana*, Page: *2A*.

[11] G. Rawick (ed.), *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Supplement Series 2,* Vol. 2. Part 1, Greenwood Press: Westport, CT (1979), 138.

[12] For discussion of the scale of sexual violence in Louisiana see A. Livesey, 'Conceived in Violence: Enslaved Mothers and their Children Born of Rape in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana', *American Nineteenth Century History* 38.3 (2017): 373-91

examine how enslavers were raised and made. As critical geographers point out, 'home' is much more than a house or a household, it includes the complex socio-spatial relations and emotions that are attached to it.[13] These relations shape its use and its physical form, meaning that in the material remnants of slave labour camps, one can find evidence of the relations and ideologies that shaped slaveholding practices.[14] The archaeological evidence here, taken alongside the testimony of enslavers, will help to unpack the malleable, fabricated, and sometimes perverse notion of 'home' that young enslavers were taught to associate with slaveholding mastery.[15]

Education

Louisiana enslaver Samuel Walker, in a diary entry from 1856, wrote that "Let a southern gentleman abide at home, or let his absences be seldom or short. With his business, his library, … periodicals and his responsibilities to god and he has within his grasp as near an approach to early contentment as is usually within the reach of mortal man".[16] Yet, despite Walker's professed linking of industry and education to ideas of 'home', most young enslavers as were not raised in this manner. In a New Orleans-published marriage guide from 1858, a writer openly assessed the shortcomings of young southern men: "From infancy to manhood the boy is indulged in ease and luxury; his every taste is gratified … he chews tobacco, smokes cigars, and revels all night under the

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[13] For an introduction to 'home' studies see A. Blunt and R. Dowling, 'Home', London: Palgrave, 2006.

[14] Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993; Theresa A. Singleton, *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, Inc., 1985); Terrence Epperson, "Constructing Difference: The Social and Spatial Order of the Chesapeake Plantation," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life,* ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999); J. W. Joseph, "White Columns and Black Hands: Class and Classification in the Plantation Ideology of the Georgia and South Carolina Lowcountry," *Historical Archaeology* 27, no. 3 (1993): 57–75

[15] For further discussion of reading sources for traces of black women's lives, see E. West, 'Reflections on the History and Historians of the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves: Enslaved Women and Intimate Partner Sexual violence', *American Nineteenth Century History,* 19.1 (2018), pp. 1-21.

[16] Samuel Walker Diary 1856-78, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University (hereafter Tulane)

influence of intoxicating liquor, and continues for weeks in this state of mind'.[17] Southern boys in Louisiana may not have been treated with the laxity reported by this writer, but the education of young boys was only of interest to Louisiana planters when it directly related to the learning of plantation enterprise.

One of the skills necessary to gain this advantage was the mastery of French and Spanish. John Palfrey sent his son away at age fourteen to New Orleans to make contacts. He first advised, 'let me observe to you Henry that as you are going amongst strangers you have it in your power to render yourself useful and agreeable to them and…establish a reputation that may benefit you throughout life'. He went on to advise him to 'progress your knowledge of the French language, and also to acquire the Spanish which will probably be of great use to you as you grow up'.[18] Palfrey had no doubt that his fourteen-year-old son would be involved in the geographically and culturally diverse business of slavery.

Early Creole education was generally conducted at home with private tutors. Lestan Prudhomme described his cousin's house as the 'schoolhouse', where the children of the extended family would be taught by a governess. After relocating to Louisiana, some Americans, however, could not get used to the creole tradition of home education. Samuel Walker described the delight that a letter from his daughter, Elia, brought to her mother's face when writing from school, and justified sending her away: 'They are better when they are at good schools than here with the uncertain experiment of private tutelage".[19] Creoles, however, were not averse to sending their sons away to be educated as the nineteenth century progressed, as long as the system was designed to

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[17] S. S. Hall, *The Bliss of Marriage, or, How to Get a Rich Wife*, New Orleans, 1858, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044009722521&view=1up&seq=8 accessed 1 June 2020

[18] John Palfrey to Henry Palfrey, April 15th 1812, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU Special Collections

[19] Samuel Walker Diary 1856-78, Tulane

mimic the education that the sons might acquire on the plantation. Jefferson College, named thus despite its strong cultural associations with the local French Creoles, aimed to instil in sons the culture of slaveholding. What there was to be learned about plantation management and sugar production, Eric Platt has argued, was done at a young age, while the college for sons aged nine to fifteen was aimed to 'safeguard forthcoming generations of creole aristocrats' through a focus on liberal arts education. Platt has written that not only did enslaved people build the college, but 'its architecture and landscaping reflected traditional symmetrical and plantation arrangements with the main building facing the river', as with the large plantation houses along the Mississippi.[20] The college also boasted of its ability to have the entire school board a steamboat for trips along the Mississippi. At Jefferson College, the students remained closely anchored to the physical spaces of their plantation homes.[21]

Bachelorhood

William Webb Wilkins of St James' Parish was keen to purchase a plantation for his son, who was away studying medicine, but he told a friend: "I advised him not to marry for one or two years and go and live with you as a bachelor, and try the chance before he entangled himself with a place or a wife".[22] Whilst 'keeping bachelor' was clearly a desirable condition, albeit temporarily, for some men, this attitude goes against the status quo in early French New Orleans, and indeed the early American republic, which Vidal writes was a

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[20] Other universities were built in this style, in particular University of Virginia, whose campus was built to accommodate enslaved people in the homes of faculty and in the dormitories of students. For discussion of slavery at the University of Virginia and other universities in the United States see C. S. Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery and the Troubled History of America's Universities,* New York: Bloomsbury (2013).

[21] R. Eric Platt, *Educating the Sons of Sugar: Jefferson College and the Creole Planter Class of South Louisiana,* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press (2017), 43; other work on college life includes .E.Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South,* Athens: University of Georgia Press (1928) and Glover, *Southern Sons.*

[22] St James, William Webb Wilkins Papers, Nov 26 (no year), LSU Special Collections

"moral and religious order based on a Christian marriage".[23] The evidence here demonstrates that, as the nineteenth century progressed, bachelorhood was promoted as a stage in the life cycle for young men, until they established a plantation home with a white woman and gained full status as a master and patriarch. This sentiment is often repeated in contemporary letters. In 1844 Willis P. Griffith wrote to his brother that he was "at 'home' (if it can be said that a bachelor has a 'home')".[24] Here, Griffith indicates that one of the primary components of a home was the presence of a wife. Marriage was an essential, and very public element of a 'home'. The physical structure of the slave labour plantation home was linked in interesting ways to masculinity and patriarchy.

A friend who wrote to James Milling, a Louisiana planter, in 1855 remarked "James, I have often heard of bachelors' lives, but I have experienced a little and will say this, if [I] was permanently settled I would live bachelor. It would not be a death".[25] Such a comment, however, has an element of reassurance that Milling's bachelor status was acceptable to his friends and acquaintances. Louis Favrot, son of a planter in West Baton Rouge parish, wrote to his brother to boast of his career choices and of his popularity with women, his words revealing the meaning of bachelorhood for men in the South:

> The knapsack or the cassock; such is my destiny. While I am taking steps toward with one I do not forget the other. I try to have as many feminine partisans as possible; it is the main point. Almost all the women in Baton Rouge favor me, that is to say, in view of my being their spiritual director.[26]

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[23] Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans:* 246; for bachelorhood in the Early Republic, see J. G. McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2009).

[24] Griffith brother letter, from Cincinnati, Ohio Jan 1844, Tulane University.

[25] Letter from James Wiley Stone, Winnsboro, S.C. to Dr James Milling, 3 Feb 1855, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

[26] Louis Favrot and Marie-Francoise Gerard Favrot to Philogene Favrot, May 13, 1813 in Wilbur E. Meneray, *The Favrot Family Papers*, Volume V, 1810-1816. Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, New Orleans, LA: 2001, 154.

Favrot links his lack of 'home' (living from a knapsack) with the number of 'female partisans' that he entertains, offering another link of the concept of a settled 'home' with a marriage. For Favrot, bachelorhood meant that he had no plantation 'home', and therefore none of the responsibilities that came with it. His knapsack, a metaphor for both his bachelorhood and the number of women that 'favor' him, does not preclude him from his religiosity; while he focused on one he did not 'forgot the other'. In fact, he reframed his popularity with women as 'spiritual'.

Evidence from the formerly enslaved fills in some of the silences in white-produced sources on bachelorhood. Victor Duhon, for example, described his mother as a 'house servant' in the white family. Victor told his interviewer, "One day she barbered my master's son, who was Lucien. He says that he'll shave her head if she won't do what he likes. After that she his woman till he marries a white lady".[27] Duhon's mother was forced into a sexual relationship with Lucien Duhon, born in 1837 to Jean Baptiste Duhon and Euphemie Prejean, both from prominent Louisiana slaveholding families in Lafayette. There were four other Duhon sons in the same plantation unit, and this level of violence could not have gone unnoticed. The 'white lady' that Victor Duhon mentions was Olympe Boudreaux, daughter of a local family. While Lucien went on to have a 'home' with a white woman, his previous sexual relationship with an enslaved woman was kept secret.[28] Mésalliances between white men and black women in New Orleans were, according to Cécile Vidal, part of the disconnection between marriage and sexuality for young men in the state. In fact, Vidal argued, the frequency with which such relationships occurred 'should not be read as an absence of race-thinking within New Orleans. On the contrary, its restriction to the privacy of private domestic homes reflects a process of racialisation'.[29] Here, Vidal argues that, in the domestic space, ideas of race were formed and

[27] *The American Slave SS2,* Vol. 4, Part 3: 1238-41
[28] Births, Marriage and Deaths, Louisiana, Ancestry.com
[29] Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans,* 283; 267. Need full citation

reinforced. Victor Duhon's mother was forced to continue her forced labor in her owner's house whilst also becoming a long-term victim of the white son's sexual violence. The white enslaving mother of Lucien Duhon added a level of legitimacy to the sexual violence by making Victor her coachman; whilst the child was not accepted as part of the family, he was kept close to his white grandmother.

While historians must turn to the testimony of the formerly enslaved for evidence of the horrific sexual violence perpetrated by white boys against enslaved women, the joy that young enslaving men found in the company of white women is well documented in white-produced sources. The diary of Lestan Prudhomme offers enthusiastic evidence. On 10th August 1850 he wrote: 'Oh the young ladies! Where there are young ladies, there is also happiness and amusements'. When the young women of whom he spoke returned to the convent to continue their studies, he wrote that "the house looks vast and empty, but I assured myself that I had good companions in books". This did not last long, however, as he ended up consoling himself by riding to his cousin Phanor Prudhomme's plantation to see his female cousin (unnamed) and demanded a '*privilege de cousin',* which was 'imparting on their lips a warm and sweet kiss'.[30]

Prudhomme did not just have close relationships with his female cousins. His diary details the friendships he developed with his close family members in the sparsely populated plantation districts outside of Natchitoches. Almost every day he visited either his cousin Phanor or 'Uncle Cloutier' -- he even wrote of shedding tears when Cloutier left the region for an unspecified amount of time. These close familial relationships were encouraged by parents in order to provide networks of support, both personal and in business, as their boys

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[30] P. L. Prudhomme diary, LSU Special Collections. From this diary, we see the gradual move from documents written entirely in French to young men such as Lestan Prudhomme, descendant of the original Prudhomme family of Natchitoches, choosing to write his personal diary in English – in spite of using French to speak with his family.

grew into men. John Palfrey, who moved to Louisiana to make his fortune in sugar soon after the Louisiana Purchase, wrote to his son Henry: "Edward promises me that he will write to you by the next mail, and hopes to convince you that he has not forgotten how, and also of his affection".[31] Palfrey mediated the close fraternal bond when he saw that it was being neglected by his sons. William Webb Wilkins, like many others, maintained this fraternal relationship into adulthood, and repeatedly wrote to his brother to ask him to see his family in his absence: "I hope you go to see my family in my absence for you are my only dear brother".[32]

Architecture

The closeness of brothers, and the attempts to foster the close relationships that would help them throughout life, manifested itself in the architecture of

[31] John Palfrey to Henry Palfrey, Nov 30 1813.
[32] William Webb Wilkins, St James' Parish, Nov 5, LSU Special Collections

Figure 1: Phanor Prudhomme’s Natchitoches townhouse, photo author’s own, 2016

Figure 2: Garçonnière at Burnside Plantation (formerly Houmas House), Ascension Parish, LA.

Historic American Buildings Survey, Richard Koch, April 1936. *WEST GARÇONNIÈRE (VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST).* Library of Congress.

Louisiana plantations. While garçonnières are rarely mentioned in historical accounts, they still exist in the architectural record. In his diary, Lestan Prudhomme described the garçonnière at his cousin's house in the colonial-era town of Natchitoches. In this house (Figure 1), the garçonnière was a 'small room' used as guest quarters. It was likely to have been used by Phanor's sons when he was in town, which was only around 15 miles away from his cotton plantation. In this style of house, originally a single-story raised creole cottage, but remodelled in 1825 to include a classical Greek Revival plantation-style lower story, the garçonnière is more likely to have been in the attic space with dormer windows. In this space, the young boys were away from the family, but close enough to be under supervision. Lestan stayed in this room at a time at which no older men were in the house; he noted in his diary that he was the 'protector' of 'Mrs. Archinard, Mrs. Ben and her sister who were there'. The young man was clearly delighted for the opportunity to protect white womanhood.

Jay Edwards has argued that architecture changed as "patterns of local knowledge and technological innovation expanded", and "the growing interconnectivity of the colonial frontier transformed its architecture profoundly, producing genres, which could no longer be referred to as Gallic".[33] The detached garçonnière did not appear on plantations until the nineteenth century, and is an example of the fusion of French creole and the Greek Revival style favoured by Anglo-Americans.[34] The remodelling of the Prudhommes' Natchitoches town house (fig. 1) demonstrates the creeping Anglo-American cultural influences on architectural practices, but the detached garçonnière takes another step in this architectural fusion. Whilst early examples of garçonnières, such as that at Phanor Prudhomme's

[33] J. D. Edwards, 'Creole Architecture: A Comparative Analysis of Upper and Lower Louisiana and Saint Domingue', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 10:3 (2006): 268.
[34] For discussion of creole remodelling see N. Willson, 'The Realm of Maiden Beauty': Spectres of Slavery, Rebellion, and Creolisation in the Landscape of Cable's Louisiana, *Comparative American Studies,* 15.1-2

townhouse, or on the Prudhommes' Oakland plantation, were situated either in the attic or at the back of the house behind the kitchen, at some point it was seen as necessary, or desirable, to move these separate quarters outside of the main enslaver's house, demonstrating a desire to keep these structures separated, both physically and ideologically, from the main enslavers' houses.

Structures in Louisiana were controlled by local wants, needs, and intentions. In his work on slavery in the urban South, Richard C. Wade wrote that enslavers in places such as New Orleans would take care to ensure that their buildings would convey their authority over their enslaved people. Wade wrote that "the physical design of the whole complex compelled slaves to center their activity upon the owner and the owner's place".[35] Some garçonnières mimicked the style of the main plantation house, and others were constructed in a similar style to the 'pigeonnières' on the plantation, with six or eight sides in keeping with the French Creole architectural style.

The garçonnières at Houmas House Plantation were of this latter French Creole style. They were hexagonal in shape, with two floors and just one large room on each. Each side of the hexagon had two windows, one upstairs and one downstairs, and the garçonnière had just one entrance, a door at the front of the house. In *Old Louisiana,* writer and later head of the Louisiana Writers' Project Lyle Saxon imagined time spent in a garçonnière, likely based on that at Houmas House. 'Although there were five bedrooms in the place", Saxon wrote,

> Tennis [a friend of Saxon's in the story] and I preferred to sleep in one of the garçonnières…When the evening's conversation was at an end, Tennis and I would take a lantern and go out into the tangle of bushes which lay between the house and the outbuildings. The lower floor of

[35] R. C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964): 59.

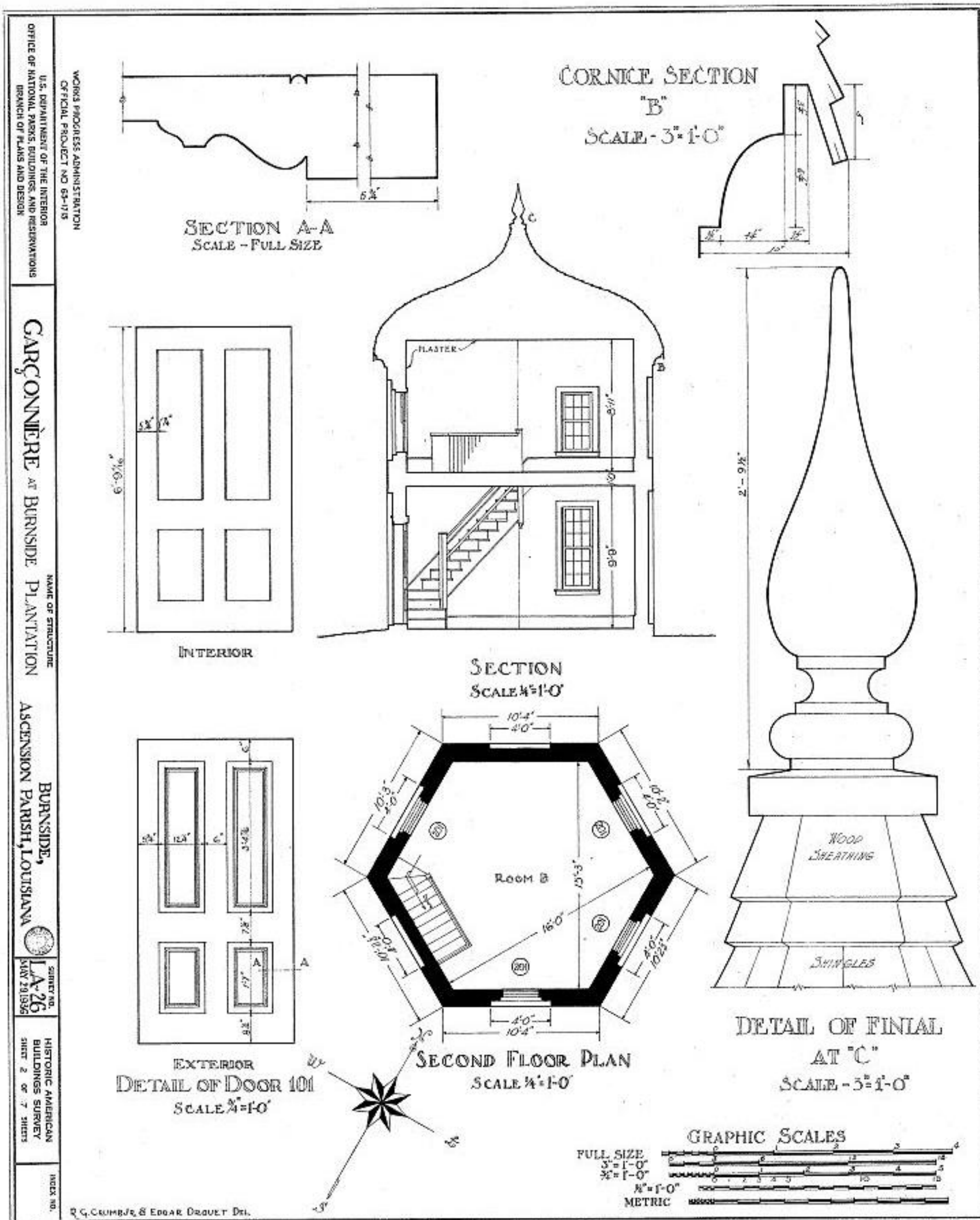

Figure 3: Historic American Buildings Survey plan of garçonnière at Houmas House (later renamed Burnside Plantation) 1936, Library of Congress.

> the garçonnière, set flush with the ground and paved with brick, was musty and damp, ...but the room above was both charming and comfortable. It was the first octagonal room I had ever seen, and the fact that it was in a tower made it romantic. There were four windows – north, south, east and west . – and the stairs rose between the north and west windows. A large four post bed with a canopy and curtains nearly filled the room; it stood with its headboard between the south and east windows and there was just room to walk between the foot of the bed and the stair rail. ...how strange and delightful it seemed to lie there in bed, watching the shimmering fireflies in the topmost branches of the trees – or looking out on one side beyond the trees to the fields of sugar cane billowing in the moonlight, or on the other side toward the levee and the Mississippi river, a very short distance away.[36]

Saxon imagined how a young man in a garçonnière might have used the space as a means of surveillance, but omits to mention the black bodies that would have laboured in the surrounding sugar fields in the daytime. Using the methodology of exploring violent spaces set out by James Tyner to 'step inside' the gaze of violent people to see how they perceive the world, Figure 3 shows a section of the second-floor plan, clearly showing six windows, one on each side of the room, offering a raised panopticon-style view of the slave labour plantation's carceral landscape. [37] Gaston Bachelard encouraged scholars of the home to understand how spaces are perceived and remembered in a certain way. [38] Using the architectural evidence of Figure 3 we can also achieve the 'inversion of perspective' described by Bachelard to understand how young men came to learn their dominance of the carceral landscape.[39] Their

[36] Lyle Saxon, *Old Louisiana,* (The Century Company: New York, 1929):44.
[37] James A. Tyner has written that "[v]iolence is a social and spatial practice; that direct violence is an act to regulate people through the discipline of space" Tyner, *Space, Place and Violence,* ix.
[38] Tyner, *Space, Place and Violence*, 4.
[39] G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: A Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, translated* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964): 149.

childhood memories of their slave labour plantation home were marked by memories of looking out from above onto the black bodies working below or attending to them at a young age in their own private space. The garçonnières at Houmas House, built by black masons, were conceived in a hexagonal-panoptic style to serve the wants and needs of the white architects and inhabitants.

In *My Diary North and South*, British traveller William Russell visited two homes containing separate houses, one he described as a "separate quarters" and the other as a "garçonnière", indicating a clear distinction between the two kinds of structures. After leaving New Orleans, he first stayed at the home of Governor Alfred Roman, in a "detached house, complete in itself, containing four bedrooms, library, and sitting-room, close to the mansion, and surrounded, like it, by fine trees". This description does not contain any signifiers that this would be a homosocial space. Russell was careful not to express or reveal too much about his hosts, although on this labour camp he commented that "[t]he women were not very well-favoured; one yellow girl, with fair hair and light eyes, whose child was quite white, excepted".[40] Russell's comment on the increasing 'whiteness' of this family of enslaved people was a common trope of nineteenth-century writers, who wished to acknowledge the sexual violence of white men against enslaved women without explicitly saying so.[41]

Next, Russell visited Houmas House, which had been purchased and renamed Burnside plantation by this time. He wrote, "I found Mr. Ward and a few merchants from New Orleans in possession of the bachelor's house (fig. 2). The service was performed by slaves, and the order and regularity of the attendants were worthy of a well-regulated English mansion". When he returned from a trip around the slave labour camp, he found "my friends enjoying a quiet siesta, and the rest of the afternoon was devoted to idleness,

[40] W. Russell, *My Diary North and South* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1863): 257.
[41] See Livesey, 'Race, Slavery and the Expression of Sexual Violence'

not at all disagreeable with a thermometer worthy of Agra".[42] Though the garçonnière was no longer being used by the enslaver's sons, it was still deployed as a homosocial space, despite its small size, and employed as such even when the larger main house was nearby. The description of the house as a place for the men to have a "siesta" allows the reader to imagine the privacy of the inside space, and how this would have been intimidating for the enslaved women who laboured inside this enclosed space with only one exit.

The garçonnières at Houmas House plantation were originally built for the young sons of John Smith Preston and Caroline Hampton Preston, the latter a daughter of Wade Hampton, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and the owner of Houmas House before it was passed on to his daughter. The diaries of overseer H. M. Seale indicate that the Prestons split their time between South Carolina and their main plantation home in the sugar parish of Avoyelles, upriver from New Orleans.[43] Nevertheless, the building of these structures away from the household is revealing of the gender dynamics of the plantation that the Prestons wished to maintain, and a clear gender split between the girls who lived in the house, and the boys who resided in the garçonnière.

The importance of the management of private and public space in order disguise activities that might go against legal or social norms and harm the youths' prospects for future marriage and prosperity are illuminated by the gossip exchanged in personal correspondence. The personal papers of Southerners were rife with gossip about marriage, and both desirable and undesirable matches. In Everard Green's private diary from the 1840s there are repeated entries related to the marriage of a 'Miss Martha W' to a 'Mr. Nichols'; he wrote that "some indiscreet persons might say it was an

[42] Russell, *My Diary North and South,* 269.
[43] Diary of H. M. Seale, LSU Special Collections

Figure 4. Houmas House Plantation, view from riverside entrance. Garçonnière can be seen to the left of the main house set back behind bushes. Photo author's own, 2018.

Figure 5. View of garçonnière from side of main enslaver's house. Photo author's own, 2018.

injudicious choice on her part—right or wrong the world will entertain opinions about business that does not concern it".[44]

Caroline Preston's name appears in the diaries of James Henry Hammond, in which he recounts illicit meetings with his nieces, the four daughters of Wade Hampton, of whom Caroline was the youngest. He described "all of them running on every occasion into my arms and covering me with kisses, lolling on my lap, pressing their bodies almost into mine, wreathing their limbs with mine, encountering warmly every portion of my frame, and permitting my hands to stray unchecked over every part of them and to rest without the slightest shrinking from it in the most secret and sacred of regions, and all of this for two years continuously". Hammond's private defence, that he 'never designed anything cruel,' says much about the dynamics of gender in the South. On account of this well-known episode, and Wade Hampton's public rejection of Hammond after his eldest daughter revealed the abuse, the girls were publicly removed to the 'edges of proper society'.[45] Drew Gilpin Faust has documented the astounding extent of public outrage over Hammond's actions, which had major repercussions for Hammond publicly and privately.[46] Caroline Preston oversaw the building of separate quarters for her sons, perhaps knowing first-hand the impact that any public scandal could have on marriageability and adolescent lives, yet in doing so was creating a risk space for enslaved women.

The complicity of white women as enslavers, as discussed by Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, is evident in the case of Caroline Preston. While she was a victim of sexual violence as a child, she also adhered to the gendered spatial

[44] Everard Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Feb 8th 1849.

[45] See Hammond's d.iary, January 31 1844, Library of Congress and discussion in Families, Sex and P. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Law in the Nineteenth-Century South,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1995), 4.

[46] D. G Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press (1985), 241-245

Figure 5: Uncle Sam Plantation, main house with garçonnière (left).

Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

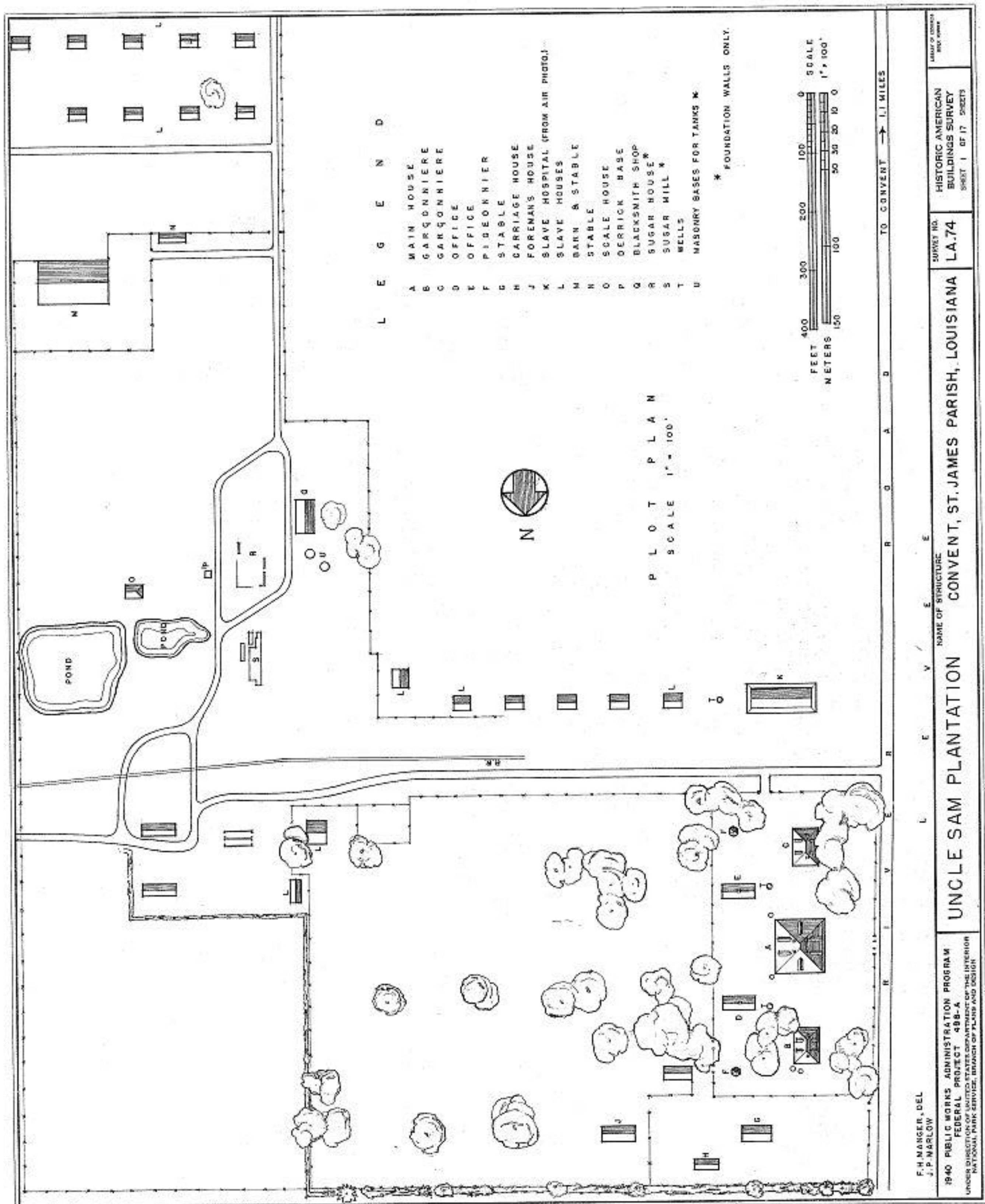

Figure 6: Uncle Sam Plantation Plan, HABS, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Note the perspective of the main house from the river, with the five buildings forming a near continuous vista across the residential plot on the plantation. Plan taken in 1938.

dynamics of the plantation that allowed her sons a uniquely private homosocial space. The garçonnières at Houmas House are slightly set back from the main house, surrounded by gardens. Figures 4 and 5 show that, while the garçonnière is close to the main house, it would be impossible to see what was happening inside through the small windows. The entrances could also have been obscured by the gardens. Figure 4 shows the plantation from the the Mississippi River; the vista would not have included the cabins of the enslaved, which would have been behind the house in view of the garçonnières.

In *The House of Bondage,* a set of interviews with formerly enslaved people from Louisiana conducted by Octavia V. Albert, the daughter of enslaved parents, and originally published in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate,* the interviewees are conscious of the spaces used by enslaved people in order to escape the gaze, cruel treatment, and punishment of white enslavers. Escapes to the woods are mentioned in three out of the seven interviews with Albert, the boundaries of the plantation associated with hope for temporary escape or respite for enslaved women. As enslaved women were more likely to abscond rather than escape, the interviews reveal the gendered dimension of navigational spaces on the slave labour plantation. 'Aunt Charlotte', an elderly friend of Albert's, told her: "They used to run away in the woods and stay till all the clothes was off their backs". One enslaved woman by the name of Hattie spent three months away from the plantation. "She used to run away and live in the woods for three and four weeks at a time," remembered Aunt Charlotte. The reason for Hattie's time spent in the woods was the physical abuse from her master and mistress and sexual abuse by the master's son. Hattie told Charlotte that she left the plantation after "old mistress came up to me one morning and went to beating me with a big iron key all over my head". Hattie had two children by the master's son, and she believed that an additional child that was born and died in the woods was his too. "Hattie wanted to get married to one of the men on the place," Charlotte remembered,

"but the master would not let her, because he wanted her for his son". Hattie was eventually caught by men on horses: "poor Hattie was in front barefooted, the dogs behind her. Hattie was almost naked that morning; blood was all on her feet as she was walking along." Hattie was marched back into the plantation space. The woods had offered a tragic end for her child, but a space that was outside of the gaze of both the white son of the enslaving family and his complicit violent parents.

Samuel Fagot built the garçonnières at Uncle Sam Plantation as "a fusion of French and American plantation ideals".[47] The aerial view of 'Uncle Sam' shows the existence of two garçonnières, both built in the same style as the main house, and large enough for them to have had house staff of their own assigned to them. They were smaller than the main house, but mirrored its design. Twenty metres away from the south garçonnière (marked C on figure 5), there was an entrance to a row of dwellings of the enslaved. From the second-floor dormer windows of the South garçonnière (see figure 4), it would have been possible to see into the spaces of the plantation reserved as homes for the enslaved people. Samuel Fagot did not have young sons, yet it is likely that the structure was built at a time when he hoped for male heirs. The garçonnières were a grand addition to his home on the Mississippi, and they completed the vista of five separate houses, with his (as patriarch) the largest and in the middle. To the visitor who arrived at the plantation from the Mississippi, this prospect indicated a man of exceptional wealth.

John Michael Vlach notes that often on plantation complexes the overseer's house stood at a "paradoxical position as intermediary between a group of slaves and their owner".[48] Yet, as can be seen from the map of Uncle Sam, the overseers' houses were often well away from the main house. Their placement, therefore, was an expression of hierarchy: he was not among the enslaved people, but he certainly was not a member of the 'master' class. Conversely,

[47] Vlach, *Back of the Big House,* 192.
[48] Vlach, *Back of the Big House,* 132.

the garçonnière was placed next to the main house. The private homosocial space was internally a formative space in which the power of slaveholding masculinity was internalized, but externally it was a show of wealth and virility of the father who had commissioned it, and an indication that there were slaveholding heirs there to inherit the patriarchal legacy.

In 1837 Harriet Martineau wrote that "the proceedings of slave households are, or may be a secret…let any one look at the positive licentiousness of the South, and declare if, in such a state of society, there can be any security for domestic purity and peace".[49] Martineau questioned whether the conditions of slavery, with all of its physical and ideological violence, was antithetical to the ideal of domestic peace. Yet, as the evidence in this article has demonstrated, enslavers did all they could to anchor their children both to the plantation 'home', using tactics such as encouraging strong bonds between brothers, supporting education that was firmly rooted in skills necessary for slaveholding, and inducing them to continue in their footsteps of slaveholding mastery.

In the private diaries of Samuel Walker, he introduces his thoughts on naming his new plantation. He considered naming it after a classical writer, yet after contemplation decided to name it instead after his daughter, 'Elia', a conscious decision to form an enduring link between his daughter and the gendered sphere of the plantation home, and christening it as a 'white' space'. Laura Locoul Gore wrote in her *Memories of the Plantation Home* that her father renamed their plantation 'Laura' soon after her birth.[50] Yet the boys of the plantation districts would inhabit their own smaller houses, houses that often

[49] Harriet Martineau, *Society in America,* New York: Percy & Reed (1837), 9.
[50] L. Locoul Gore, *Memories of the Plantation Home & A Creole Family Album,* Vacherie, La: The Zoe Company, inc (2001).

mirrored that of the planter-patriarchs; a physical space that reinforced ideas of gender and race and introduced to them the enslaver's gaze and mastery over the carceral space of the slave labour plantation.

This article has explored the lives of adolescent men in Louisiana through the traces left behind in letters, diaries, and the architectural record. Yet these white-created sources can never reveal the extent of violence that enslaved people experienced at the hands of the young sons of Louisiana enslavers. Rosa Maddox, born in 1848 in Louisiana, remembered, "[w]heee! Nobody needs to ask me. I can tell you that a white man laid a [black] gal whenever he wanted her. Leastways they wanted to start themselves out on the [black] women".[51] Maddox's testimony echoes that of countless other 1930s interviewees and abolitionists, who reported that young white men in the South perpetrated sexual violence against black women at a young age. Yet the architectural evidence shows that, at the same time, both Creole and Anglo-American Louisiana planters moved the single garçonnière out of the attic of the creole house, where it appeared in early French architecture in the Americas, to one or two separate buildings on the plantation, thus creating the conditions of a 'risk space' within the sexualised geography of the slave labour plantation. The garçonnière, with its privacy and age-and gender-specificity, constituted just one space of increased risk for enslaved women on Louisiana slave labour plantations from a violence that was simultaneously shaped and produced by the built environment.

[51] *TAS SS2*, Vol. 7, Part 6: 2521.

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