

THE MACARTY PLANTATION
IN NEW ORLEANS' BYWATER NEIGHBORHOOD

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The purpose of this report is to give an accurate history of the plantation of Louis Barthélémy de Macarty *père* and *fil*s in the downriver neighborhood of New Orleans now known as the Bywater – and most especially to correct some misconceptions about the Macarty Plantation House and the Macarty School.

Louis Barthélémy de Macarty *père* was the eldest son of Barthélémy Daniel de Macarty. Barthélémy Daniel had arrived in the Louisiana colony from France in the early 1730s. He and his wife Françoise Hélène Pellerin produced seven daughters and four sons, and by the early nineteenth century, their descendants had amassed extensive plantation lands and many slaves and numbered among the aristocracy of Orleans Parish.

In his youth, Louis Barthélémy de Macarty also pursued a military career and was knighted a Chevalier of St. Louis. He usually signed his name “Louis Chevalier Macarty,” leading some to assume that Chevalier was his middle name when it was actually his title. In 1776 Louis Barthélémy contracted marriage with Marie Jeanne Lerable, a wealthy widow who owned an indigo plantation fronting the Mississippi River below New Orleans.¹ The record of their wedding is missing from the sacramental registers of the St. Louis Cathedral.

Macarty soon began adding to his wife's landholdings. In 1785, he bought a plantation on the river, including a large house with galleries, a garden with ornamental trees, a hospital, a fully equipped sawmill, four cabins, and twenty-four slaves with various skills. In 1794, Macarty bought two adjacent parcels of land with buildings. The couple eventually possessed a plantation of about 1,344 acres roughly between today's Congress and Mazant streets backed by what is now St. Claude Avenue and at one time running even further back into the cypress swamp to today's Claiborne Avenue.² No city streets were cut through the Macarty lands until the late 1850s, so it is impossible to give exact boundaries.

Louis Barthélémy and Marie Jeanne had two children. Their son, also named Louis Barthélémy, was born in 1783, and their daughter, Marie Delphine, was born in 1787.³ Delphine would later become the infamous Madame Lalaurie, whose atrocities against her slaves were revealed by an 1834 fire at her luxurious mansion in the Vieux Carré.⁴

Delphine was first married, at age fourteen, to Ramon López y Ángulo, *intendente* of Louisiana and West Florida under the Spanish administration. With him she had one daughter, Marie Delphine Francesca Borja. After his death she married the Frenchman Jean Paul Blanque, a merchant, slave trader, lawyer, banker, state legislator, and political intriguer. With her second husband Delphine had three daughters, Pauline, Laure, and Jeanne, and one son, Paulin.

Jean Blanque died in 1816, leaving Delphine to settle his complicated and heavily indebted estate.⁵ In 1817 she bought from his creditors the country home that she had shared with her husband. This property, known as the “Villa Blanque,” is situated near the river on the border between today's Faubourg Marigny and the Bywater. There were no city directories for

the years 1817-1820, but *Paxton's New-Orleans Directory and Register* for 1822 lists Madame Widow Blanque at 249 Levee (now Decatur) below D'Enghein (now Franklin). Louis Barthélémy Macarty père and fils were listed in the same directory at their family plantation on Levee near Olivier's rum distillery. Delphine does not appear in later directories for the 1820s. She almost certainly continued to live at the Villa Blanque with the four Blanque children (her older daughter was already married), not on the Macarty Plantation with her father and brother.

Louis Barthélémy Macarty père died on October 21, 1824, leaving his property to his legitimate children, Louis Barthélémy fils and Delphine, widow of Jean Blanque. On June 23, 1825, the surveyor Louis Bringier drew up a plan and description of the division between Louis Barthélémy and Delphine, showing three long, narrow strips of land extending back from the river between the Montreuil (upriver) and Olivier (downriver) plantations. The central portion, which shows the main house with a long allée of trees leading to Levee Street along the river, was labeled "Louis B. Macarty." The undeveloped land on either side was designated as belonging to "M^{me} Blanque." This plan is attached to an act before the notary Marc Lafitte dated October 22, 1825.⁶

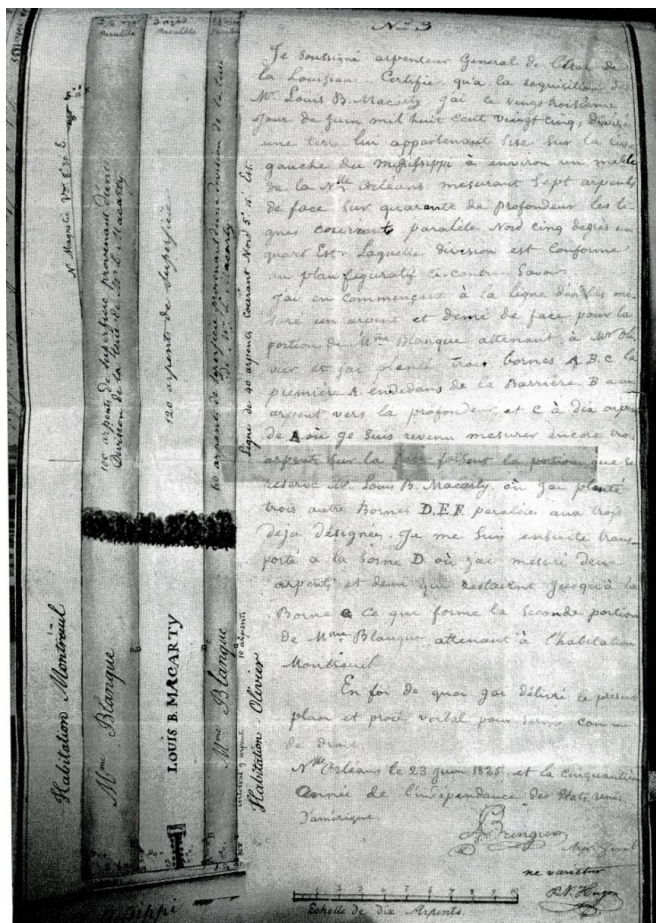


Figure 1

Plan by Louis Bringier, June 23, 1825, showing the division of the Macarty Plantation between Louis Barthélémy Macarty fils and Delphine Macarty, widow of Jean Blanque, attached to "Registration and Deposit by Hugon in the name of L.B. Macarty," Acts of Marc Lafitte, October 22, 1825, vol. 28, p. 354, Notarial Archives Research Center.

Louis Barthélémy *filis'* land was roughly between today's Pauline and Bartholomew streets; Delphine's downriver strip was roughly between today's Bartholomew and Mazant streets, and her upriver strip was roughly between today's Congress and Pauline streets.

Three days after her father died, Delphine Macarty Blanque cashed in half of her inheritance. On October 24, 1825, she appeared before the notary Hugues Lavergne to sell her downriver strip of land to Marie Azélie Zeringue, wife of Joseph Lombard, *filis*, for 7,500 piastres.⁷ This would become the Lombard Plantation, the main house of which still stands at 3933 Chartres at the corner of Bartholomew. This structure has been beautifully restored by Dr. Frederick Starr, as documented in his 2013 book *Une Belle Maison: The Lombard Plantation House in New Orleans's Bywater*.⁸



Figure 2
Lombard House in the 1930s, before restoration. Hermann Buthmann ran an art repair shop there. Photograph Charles Franck Collection, accession no. 1979.325.1299, The Historic New Orleans Collection. Reproduced in Starr, *Une Belle Maison*, 108.

Leonard Louis Nicolas Lalaurie, the man who was to become Delphine's third husband, was born to middle-class parents in a small village in southwestern France. In February of 1825, after graduating from medical school, twenty-two-year-old Louis arrived in New Orleans. Despite the difference in their age and financial status, the Widow Delphine Macarty Blanque became romantically involved with young Dr. Lalaurie, and by late 1826 she was pregnant with his child. On January 12, 1828, five months after their son Jean Louis was born, Louis returned from a trip out of the state and he and Delphine were finally married.⁹

Their marriage contract stipulated that Delphine would retain title to all the property she brought into the union: 66,390 piastres worth of jewelry, clothing, furniture, silverware, farm equipment and animals, slaves, promissory notes, and real estate. Among Delphine's land

holdings were the Villa Blanche, “a plantation of one and a half arpents facing the river by forty arpents deep, situated between the land of M^{me} Godin (Felicite Lepine, widow of Pierre Paul Godin) and M^r Roffignac, valued at 20,000 piastres.” Also listed was the upriver strip of land inherited from her father: “two and a half arpents facing the Mississippi River by forty arpents deep, situated between the plantations of M^r Montreuil and M^r [Louis Barthélémy] Macarty, with all dependencies, valued at 10,000 piastres.” Dr. Louis Lalaurie possessed only 2,000 piastres in assets, and even that—an inheritance from his mother—was controlled by his father.¹⁰

Having settled their business affairs, Delphine and Louis proceeded directly to St. Louis Cathedral to be married. When inscribing the act in the sacramental register, the priest appended to the usual particulars the statement that “the parties by the said marriage expressed their wish to legitimize their child Jean.”¹¹

On January 28, 1828, sixteen days after she married Louis Lalaurie, Delphine sold her upriver strip of inherited land to real estate speculators Louis Donnet and Martin Duralde for 13,750 piastes. The buyers were to acquire “two and a half arpents facing the Mississippi River by forty arpents in depth...with buildings and dependancies...between the property of M^{me} Widow Montreuil and M^r Louis Barthélémy Macarty.”¹² Delphine had obviously been developing and building on her strip of land; when she acquired it in 1825, it was said to be “barren of any buildings with the exception of a few negro cabins.”¹³ Donnet and Duralde dissolved their partnership on November 5, 1831, and Duralde retained the property until 1835, when it was seized by his creditors. The case before the Parish Court included a long list of lands owned by Duralde, among them a “lot situated in the Faubourg Washington...with buildings and improvements...consisting of a brick factory and sawmill.”¹⁴

At some point a residence had been constructed on this property. It was not a grand plantation “big house” like the Macartys’, but a handsome building very similar to the main house of the Lombard Plantation and probably built at around the same time, the mid-1820s. The house might have been commissioned by Delphine Macarty Blanche or by Donnet or Duralde. No such structure was mentioned in the 1828 act of sale between Delphine and Donnet and Duralde or in Duralde’s 1835 bankruptcy case. The house was later identified as 619 Congress Street.

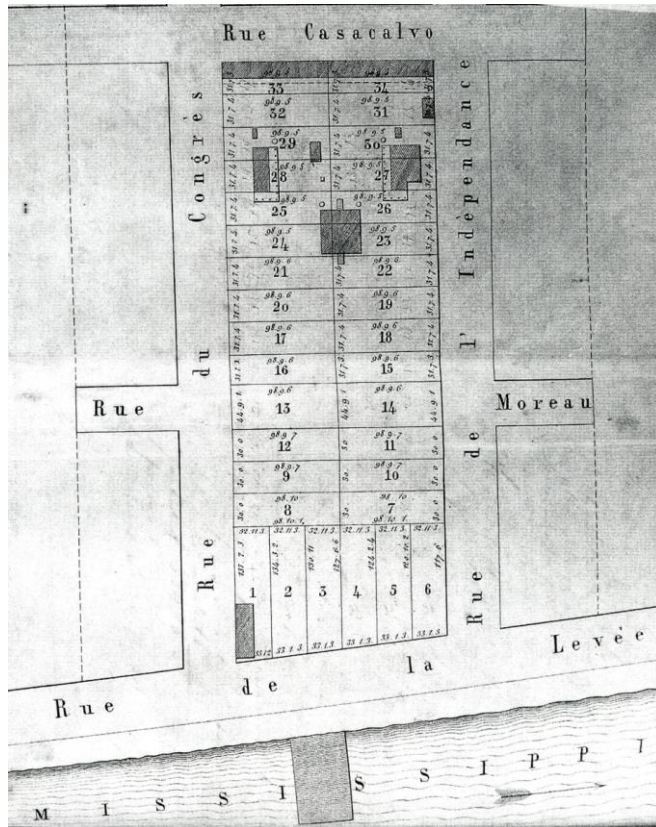
Frederick Starr, in *Une Belle Maison*, states that Delphine had been living at her father’s plantation since the death of Jean Blanche, and she was “still living there when she married her third husband...on June 12, 1825.... At the same time that workmen were constructing the Lombards’ new home, Delphine Macarty was planning a new house for herself and her husband on her adjacent parcel, in the middle of what is now the block bounded by Chartres, Alvar (formerly Jeannet), Pauline, and Royal streets.... After the Civil War, the house assumed a new identity as the Macarty School.” Starr postulates that the old Macarty plantation house was swept away by the Mississippi River in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵

This statement is problematic for several reasons. As we have seen, in the 1820s Delphine

lived with her children at the Villa Blanque, not at the Macarty Plantation. She may have built a house on her upriver parcel of land, but it was not “for herself and her husband.” Delphine Macarty Blanque and Louis Lalaurie were not married until January 1828, and the 1830 census shows that they continued to live at the Villa Blanque until they moved to their new mansion on Royal Street in the Vieux Carré in 1831. (This building, site of Madame Lalaurie’s slave abuse, is now known as the “Haunted House.”) The Macarty Plantation House was not destroyed by the flooding of the river, and it was this house, not 619 Congress Street, that became the Macarty School and served in that capacity until 1926.

The house that became 619 Congress appears on a 1849 plan by J.A. d’Hemecourt, in which it is located in the mostly undeveloped square bounded by Congress, Casa Calvo (now Royal), Independence, and Levee. Square in shape with steps in the front and back, it is surrounded by smaller outbuildings.¹⁶

Figure 3



Plan by J.A. d’Hemecourt, January 17, 1849, attached to a mortgage from Citizens’ Bank to the Cotton Press, Acts of Charles Bodousquie, March 15, 1849, NARC. The house is located in the mostly undeveloped square bounded by Congress, Casa Calvo (now Royal), Independence, and Levee sitting at the intersection of lots 23, 24, 25, and 26. Levee Street has now disappeared, and the street here called Moreau is now Chartres.

In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this house was still prominent in the center of what is now designated Square 136 (bounded by Congress, Independence, Royal, and Chartres). For unexplained reasons, it does not appear in the 1883 the Robinson’s Atlas map. It does show up on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for 1893 and on subsequent Sanborn maps, where it is numbered 619 Congress Street.¹⁷

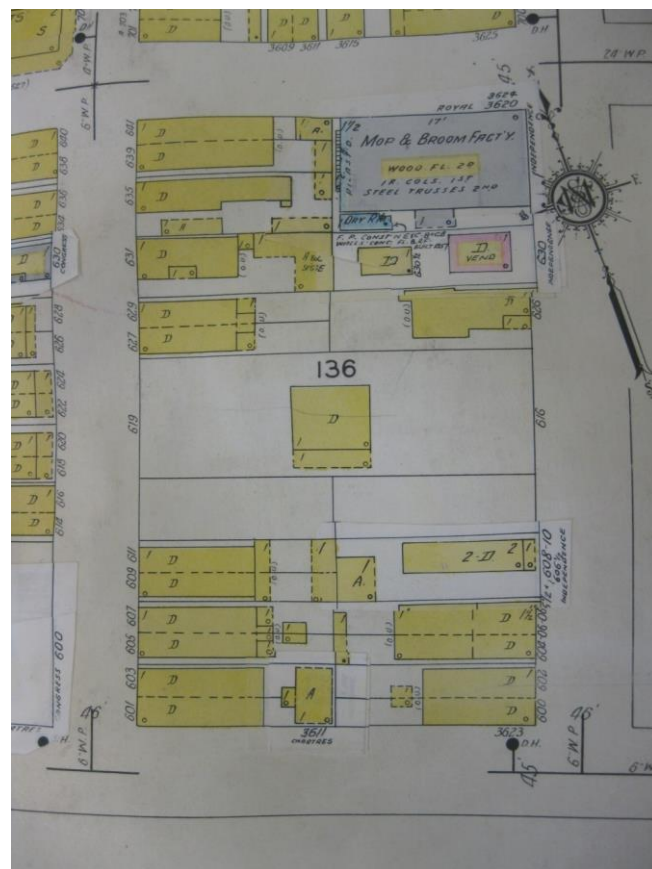
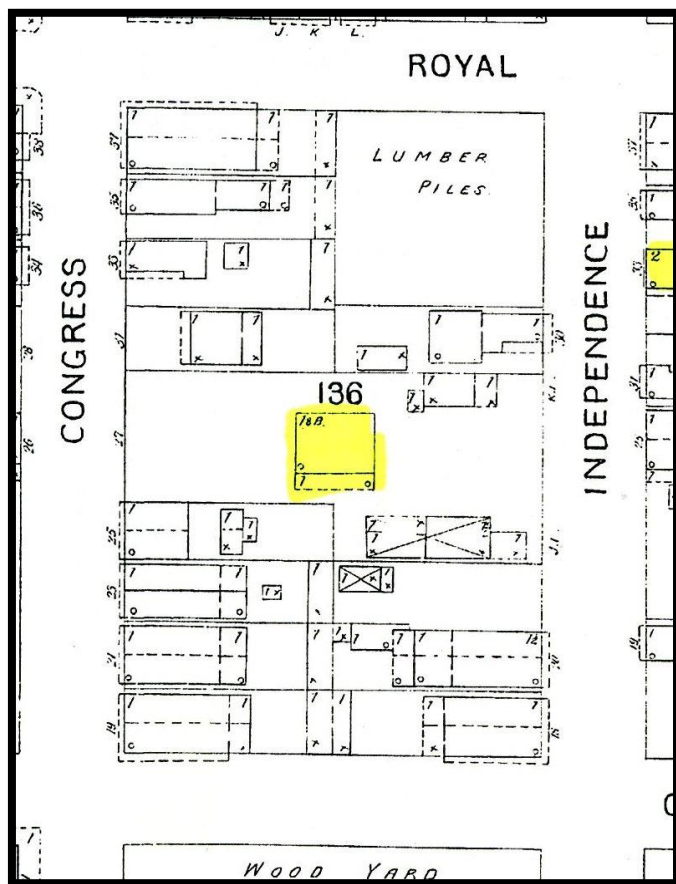


Figure 4

1893 Sanborn Map, volume 4, sheet 148, Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division. The house later numbered 619 Congress was located in square 136 bounded by Congress, Royal, Independence, and Levee.

Figure 5

1937 Sanborn Map, volume 1, sheet 909. Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University. Square 136 had changed very little since the 1890s. 619 Congress is still there, and what was labeled as "lumber piles" at the corner of Royal and Independence in 1893 had become a mop and broom factory in 1937.

Newspaper articles from 1931 identify 619 Congress as the Olympia Pleasure Club, site of popular boxing matches.¹⁸ It was photographed around this time by the architect-historian-preservationist Richard Koch. The original Koch photographs are at the Southeastern Architectural Archives at Tulane University. One of them is reproduced in *New Orleans Architecture: The Creole Faubourgs* (1984) where the authors commented that “in the front of the property [owned by Duralde and Donnet] between Congress and Independence streets, until eight or ten years ago stood an interesting raised house with a hip roof.”¹⁹ This indicates that 619 Congress was demolished sometime in the 1970s.



Figure 6
619 Congress Street,
photograph 1930s by
Richard Koch,
Southeastern
Architectural
Archive, Tulane
University.

Louis Barthélémy Macarty *fils* continued to live in the family plantation house after his father died in 1824. He probably made improvements to the residence purchased by Louis Barthélémy *père* in 1785. City directories for 1824, 1832, 1834, and 1838 list “L.B. Macarty, planter, at Levee near Convent,” referring to the second Ursuline Convent a little further downriver near the present Industrial Canal. No photographs or drawings of the Macarty Plantation House have been discovered. It probably looked something like the Olivier Plantation House that stood just downriver from the Macarty property. By the time the Olivier House and other plantation homes along this stretch of the river were being documented by Richard Koch and the Historic American Building Survey in the 1930s, the Macarty Plantation House/Macarty School had already lost its upper story and later on the building disappeared altogether.



Figure 7
David Olivier
Plantation House,
photograph 1934 by
Richard Koch for the
Historic American
Buildings Survey
(Library of Congress,
Prints and
Photographs online
catalog).

The house was built about 1820 in what is now square 131 between Mazant and France. In 1833 Olivier sold the property to Louis Barthélémy Macarty, Etienne Carraby, Martin Duralde, and Philippe Guesnon. They divided the land for sale as residential lots and retained the house, which eventually became the St. Mary's Orphan Asylum. The building was razed in 1949.

The historian Charles Gayarré had known Louis Barthélémy Macarty and his father. In a story published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of 1890, Gayarré described the younger Macarty as "handsome, possessed of those clean-cut features which characterize the patrician of long descent, rich, and distinguished in every way." He lived on the Macarty Plantation behind a "high wooden fence" within which he cultivated his "luxuriously perfumed garden" and enjoyed his library of the "most costly editions." All of his business was conducted through an agent, who invested his money in land and slaves to such an extent that Macarty amassed a fortune.²⁰

In 1840 Louis Barthélémy left New Orleans with his young mistress, Eugénie Adelaide Gormans, and their infant daughter. The couple separated in Paris. Eulalie married someone else and Louis Barthélémy went on his own for a grand tour of Europe.²¹ After returning to New Orleans in 1842, he again resided on the Macarty Plantation. He was listed in city directories on "Levee between Independence and Bartholomew," and on "Old Levee corner Bartholomew."

Louis Barthélémy Macarty *fils* died at age sixty-two on December 4, 1846.²² In his will, enacted on September 19 of that year, he freed his slaves and left one-quarter of his estate to

Louise Macarty, his natural child with Eugénie Gormans, and the remainder to his sister Delphine Macarty Lalaurie.²³ A few days later, a court-appointed assessor made an inventory of his possessions. The forty-eight-page document lists furniture, art objects, statuary, books, “casts, spheres, and globes,” and Daguerreotype apparatus, indicating that, as Gayarré had described him, Louis Barthélémy was a man of learning and culture. Also listed were loans, promissory notes, contracts, buildings, and land. The eleven slaves freed by his will were specified as *statu libers*, a legal term meaning that they had acquired the right to freedom in the future. The value of the entire estate was 261,224 piastres, equivalent to over seven million dollars in today’s currency.²⁴

The auction of Louis Barthélémy Macarty’s properties was announced in the *New Orleans Bee* on May 14, 1847, by the Sheriff of Orleans Parish. The notice gives a detailed description of the Macarty plantation house, outbuildings, and grounds in the neighborhood by then known as the Faubourg Washington:

A plantation or country residence...situated in Suburb Washington...on Levee between Independence and Barthélémy streets...facing the River Mississippi...rear on Good Children [now St. Claude]...with the batture, which is always rented, running between the plantation and the river. There is on said piece of land (1) a dwelling house bricked between posts, shingle roofed, the ground floor being divided into eight rooms, the second floor also into eight rooms, with a large gallery running around the building. (2) a frame house used as a kitchen, with two servants’ rooms. (3) another frame building, shingle roofed, one room of which is used as a hospital, another as a washing room, and the three others with a gallery are given up to servants. (4) divers other outhouses, such as hen and pigeon roosts, two coach houses, a frame building with...a stable in the rear, negro huts, two cisterns, a greenhouse well glazed, flower gardens, ornamental trees &c. The property is half an hour’s distance from the city, and the public road is well paved...offering a thousand conveniences to a rich man or considerable enticement to industry, as it may be made to yield a large income. The grounds are well stocked with...fruit trees of all kinds.²⁵

John McDonogh, a native of Baltimore who had established a very successful business career in New Orleans, bought the Macarty plantation from the 1847 sheriff’s auction.²⁶ In his will, written twelve years before his death, McDonogh left most of his estate to the cities of New Orleans and Baltimore to be used for charitable purposes. His most cherished project was “the establishment and support of free schools...wherein the poor...of both sexes and all classes and castes of color shall have admittance free of expense.” McDonogh specified that his New Orleans land holdings were not to be sold, but were to “remain together as one estate” and

rented to “good tenants.” The proceeds were to be applied to “the purposes for which it is hereby intended and destined,” primarily free education for every child.²⁷

McDonogh died in 1850, but his succession was not settled until 1858. Contrary to his wish that his real estate be kept together and rented out, the City of New Orleans sold most of the McDonogh properties to individual buyers and used the \$704,440 in profits to establish public schools.²⁸ The hundreds of acts related to the McDonogh estate occupy an entire volume of the notary Eusebe Bouny, who provided printed forms specifically for these transactions.

City surveyors subdivided the land into twenty streets with 795 building lots.²⁹ At that time two streets extending back from the river were created between Independence and Bartholomew. They were named Pauline and Jeanne (or Jeannet) for Louis Barthélémy Macarty’s nieces, Delphine’s daughters Pauline and Jeanne Blanque. Jeanne Street was later renamed Alvar. An article titled “Sale of the McDonogh Estate” appeared in the *Daily Picayune* of April 28, 1859. Here it was stated that two blocks were to be reserved for a public square, and “the large building formerly the residence of L.B. Macarty, with its surrounding grounds,” was to be used for a school. The writer thought the subdivision was of great benefit to the city because the Macarty Plantation had been “a barrier to the spirit of improvement...and interfered sadly with those who owned property on the other side...on account of the long road they had to follow” to get around it.³⁰ This statement is borne out by Norman’s Plan of New Orleans & Environs for 1854, which shows the Macarty Plantation as an undeveloped area between Independence and Bartholomew going back beyond St. Claude.



Figure 8
Norman’s Map of New Orleans and Environs 1854. The Macarty Plantation appears as an undeveloped strip running back from the Mississippi River.

An article from the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* of August 11, 1859, took a more nostalgic view of the transformation of this lovely complex of buildings and gardens into a suburban neighborhood. These observations are interesting enough to quote in full:

The dismemberment of the Macarthy [*sic*] Plantation progresses briskly, and is withal a rather regretful thing to behold. The shady old plantation with its wealth of spreading trees, shrubbery, and flowers, is now all cut up into squares and picketed off in lots, and whilst the cows roam at will and hogs root around the fig and oleander trees and the hedges and flower beds, the work of metamorphosis into a city-like settlement progresses on all sides.

New streets, with new bridges and new corner lamps, intersect the plantation; the old woodwork of the place, and the old statues that used to adorn the central avenue through the garden are scattered about in the dirt, and whilst the birds continue to warble and the locusts to sing from the shade of the old live-oaks and magnolias and catalpas, the louder chorus of the carpenter's hammer and saw issues through the hedges, and the odor of the flowers comes blended with that of the new pine lumber which is strewn on every side. It looks hard to see such a delicious natural spot so ruthlessly ripped up, though indeed it be for the greater good of the public and the spread of the city.

It is some comfort to know, however, that a large part of the plantation is to be reserved for a public square, and that the roomy old mansion, with a proper surrounding space, will be permitted to remain to subserve the purposes of a public school. The public square, when properly enclosed and laid out, will be the largest and shadiest in the city. The fencing is already under contract. Several houses are already built amid the shades nearest the river, and others are rapidly going up, whilst numbers of large lots, their size showing the building calculations of their owners, are fenced in to preserve the trees and shrubs that fell to them respectively of the partition. Great numbers of people flock to the plantation every Sunday, to roam around through the shades and enjoy the odors of the flowers whilst yet they remain.

In a few years nothing will proclaim what was once the Macarthy Plantation, save the shady old trees standing in people's yards, and the old mansion school house in the middle.³¹

Most municipal projects went on hold as New Orleans became embroiled in the Civil War. On January 26, 1861, delegates to Louisiana's state convention voted to secede from the United States. Admiral Farragut's fleet took New Orleans on April 24, 1862. The city was occupied for the duration of the war by Union troops. It is unclear exactly when the Macarty School opened, but it was definitely in operation by 1865, when the Superintendent of Public

Schools stated in the *Daily Picayune* that the annual examination at the Macarty School for [colored] Boys and Girls, on Pauline Street between Chartres and Royal, would take place on June 21. In 1866 the newspaper again reported on the annual examination, noting that there were about 250 students in attendance at the school, which was “formerly the residence on the McCarthy [sic] Plantation.” In 1867 the school board directed that it be converted to a boys’ school.³²

By 1879 the original Macarty plantation house was becoming dilapidated. Lafcadio Hearn, in his “Wayside Notes” column for the *New Orleans Item*, kept up a droll commentary about the “fifty thousand bats” infesting the loft of the school building and depositing a “three-inch layer of guano” that “percolates the ceilings and runs down the walls” when it rains, making teachers and students ill.³³ On August 15, 1880, a citizen complained to the *Daily Picayune* that the “old Macarty school-house” still contained “myriads of bats.” There was talk of replacing it with a new school, and the letter writer, believing the Macarty School was going to be demolished, feared that “the bats will seek other quarters and make lives miserable if they are not annihilated.”³⁴

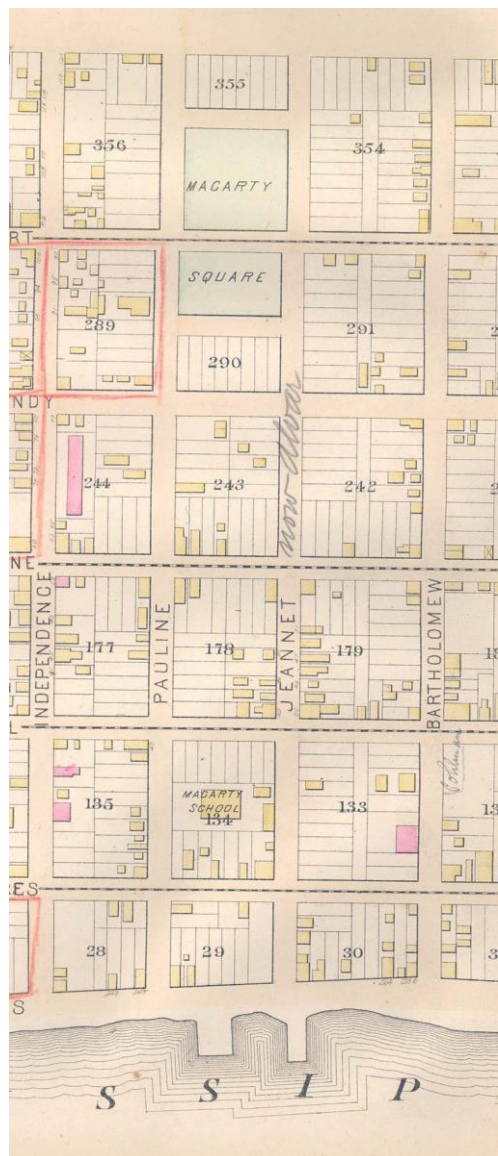


Figure 9

Robinson's Atlas of New Orleans 1883, sheet 20, showing the Macarty School, formerly the Macarty plantation house, in square 134 (Pauline, Royal, Jeannet, and Chartres), and Macarty Square behind it in squares 355 and 290 (Pauline, St. Claude, Jeannet, and Dauphine). The Lombard Plantation house shows up prominently in the lower right of square 133 (Jeannet, Royal, Bartholomew, and Chartres) at the downriver corner of Chartres and Bartholomew streets. On this map, yellow indicated a wooden structure and pink indicated brick.

Rather than building a new school for boys of color, the city retained the old Macarty plantation house as the Macarty School and constructed a new school for white boys behind Macarty Square between Rampart, St. Claude, Pauline, and Alvar.³⁵ On November 10, 1880, the *Daily Picayune* announced that “The old McCarthy School, at the corner of Pauline and Royal streets, has been opened for the reception of colored pupils. The schoolhouse has been thoroughly renovated. The upper story, which was formerly the abode of bats, has been removed, and the bats have left for parts unknown. The new McDonogh School No. 12, on McCarthy Square, will be opened in a few days, or as soon as the furniture is received.” A picture of McDonogh 12 published in the *Reports of the Boards of Commissioners for the McDonogh School Fund 1892-1895* shows a large and handsome Victorian-style building with a mansard roof, a central tower, and four turrets.³⁶

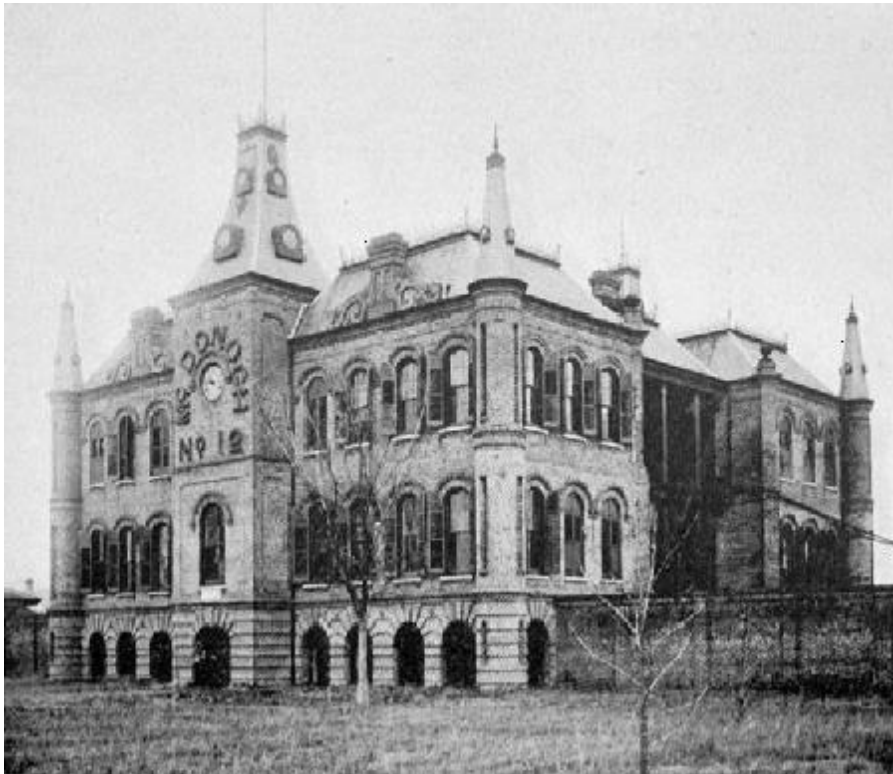


Figure 10
McDonogh School no. 12, photograph published in *Reports of the Boards of Commissioners for the McDonogh School Fund 1892-1895*, p. 28, original in New York Public Library, online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433014832467;view=1up;seq=36>.

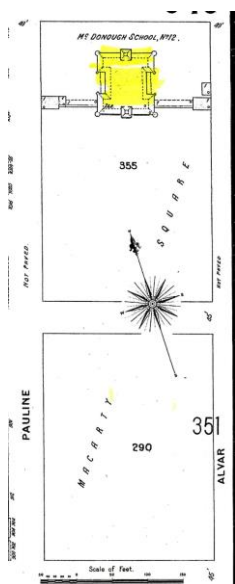


Figure 11

Sanborn Map 1896, vol. 4, sheet 346, cropped to show McDonogh School no. 12 behind Macarty Square in the area bounded by Pauline, St. Claude, Alvar, and Burgundy streets. The cross street is North Rampart. Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division

Frederick Starr believes that the Macarty Plantation House, rather than becoming the Macarty School, was lost to the encroachment of the Mississippi River in the 1890s. This idea is in part derived from George Washington Cable's short story, "Belles Demoiselles Plantation," published in his 1879 collection *Old Creole Days*.³⁷

In *Old Creole Days*, Cable tells of the wealthy and aristocratic Jean Albert Henri Joseph de Charleu-Marot, widowed father of seven lovely daughters and owner of Belles Demoiselles Plantation. De Charleu schemes to acquire some property belonging to his disreputable distant kinsman, "Injin Charlie," with the idea of razing its dilapidated buildings and erecting a fine new mansion. Even as the two men are arguing about terms, Belles Demoiselles "suddenly sunk...into the merciless, unfathomable flood of the Mississippi," taking with it the seven daughters. De Charleu spends his final year being cared by "Injin Charlie" in his modest home.

Lafcadio Hearn's illustrated article, "The Scenes of Cable's Romances," was published in the *Century Magazine* of 1883. Here Hearn identified the locations used by Cable for some of the stories in *Old Creole Days*. Hearn wrote, on page 47, that "the reader...will doubtless pardon me for leaving the precise location of 'Belles Demoiselles' a mystery...and for keeping secret its real and ancient name.... To reach it, he must journey far from the creole faubourg [the Vieux Carré] and beyond the limits of New Orleans to a certain unfamiliar point on the river's bend, whence a ferryman...will row him to the farther side of the Mississippi...." He then described a ruined garden once filled with "exotic trees," "fantastic shrubs," and "the rarest floral products of both hemispheres" surrounding a grand and decaying house with "four pillared façades [and] superb porches, with tiers of galleries."

This description certainly sounds like the Macarty Plantation House and the marvelous garden created by Louis Barthélémy Macarty *fils*, but Hearn went on to say that "the old creole estate has never changed hands, because no speculating utilitarian could buy up the plantation

to remove...its proud homestead and condemn its odorous groves to the saw-mill." The only threat to the house and its grounds was the river that was "ever gnawing at the levee...devouring the roadway [and] burrowing nearer and nearer to the groves and the gardens." Hearn made clear that this disaster had not yet occurred, but that "Mr. Cable has rightly predicted the ghastly destiny of 'Belles Demoiselles Plantation.'"

A careful reading of Hearn's article reveals that Belles Demoiselles was *not* the Macarty Plantation. Recall that Hearn had written a *City Item* column about the Macarty School in 1879. He was undoubtedly aware that John McDonogh bought the plantation immediately after Louis Barthélémy Macarty died, and that by 1859 the house had been designated for use as a school and the garden was being cut up into building lots. Hearn also specified that the prototype for Belles Demoiselles was on the "further side of the Mississippi," meaning the "west bank." The city of New Orleans, including the Bywater/Macarty Plantation, is on the "east bank." Hearn's *Century Magazine* article is illustrated by reproductions of fine etchings by the acclaimed draftsman Joseph Pennell, made during Pennell's 1882 visit to New Orleans. All have captions identifying them with one of Cable's short stories: "Sieur George," "Madame Delphine," "Madame John's Legacy," and the "Café des Exiles." But on page 46, facing Hearn's comments about "Belles Demoiselles Plantation," is an illustration simply captioned "A Creole Cottage of the Colonial Time," without specifying that it was related to Belles Demoiselles Plantation or the home where Injin Charlie cared for Monsieur De Charleu. The etching bears a striking resemblance to the Lombard Plantation House, which is located one square above the Macarty Plantation House.³⁸

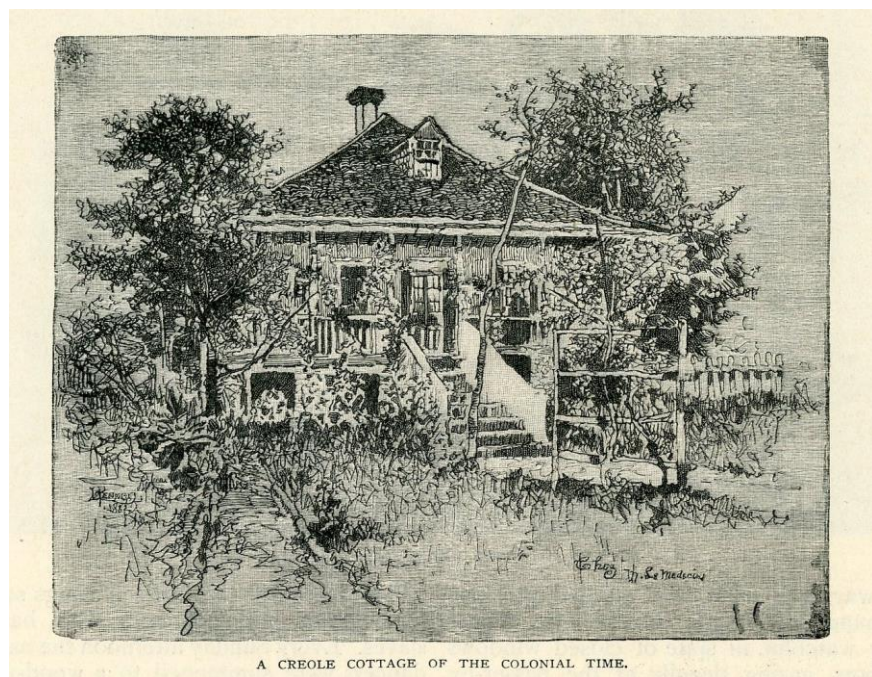


Figure 12

Illustration by Joseph Pennell from Lafcadio Hearn's article "The Scenes of Cable's Romances," *Century Magazine*, 1883, collection of the author. Pennell's signature and the date 1882 are in the lower left and blend into the shrubbery. A handwritten title in the lower right appears to say "Chez M. Ls Medscine." The significance of this is a mystery. For more on Pennell's time in New Orleans and his work for the *Century Magazine*, see E.C. Matthews, *Joseph Pennell's Sketches of Old New Orleans* (Hope Publications, 1966), 1-16. For more on the owners and uses of the Lombard House around 1882, see Starr, *Une Belle Maison*, 101-02.

The Macarty School endured in its original location until 1927. The 1883 Robinson’s Atlas and the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1885, 1893, and 1908 show the “McCarthy School (Negro)” located in Square 134 bounded by Chartres, Pauline, Alvar, and Royal.

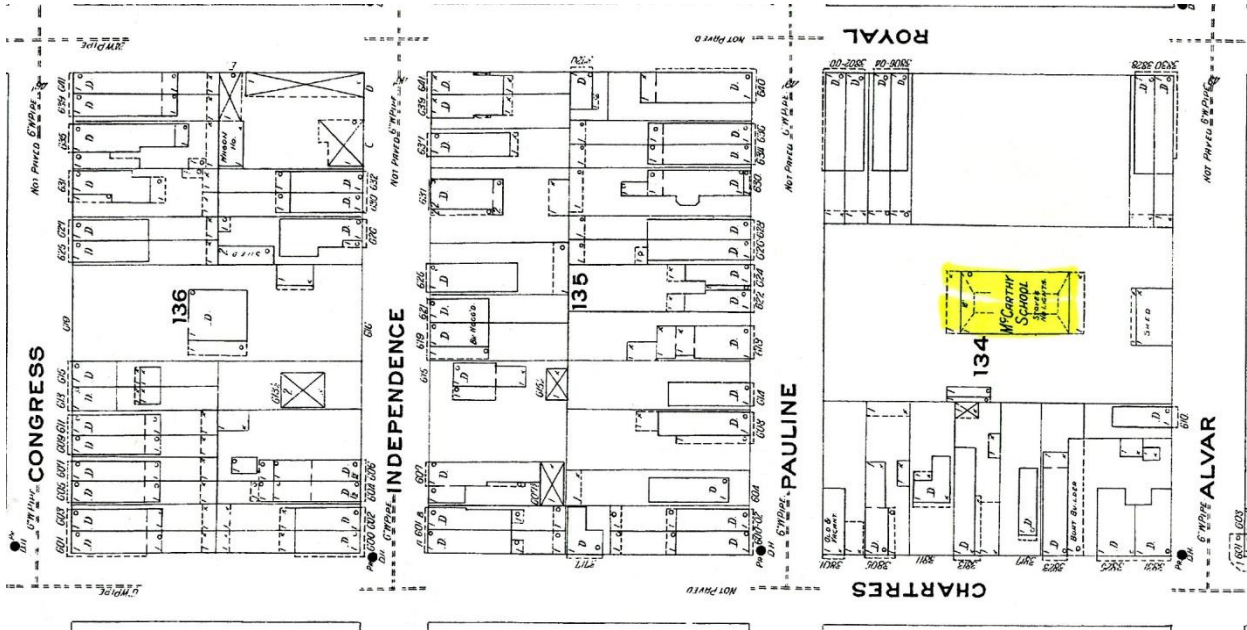


Figure 13
Sanborn Map 1908, volume 1, sheet 34, square 134. Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division.

In 1920 the fire marshal found that the “McCarthy” School was “crumbling to pieces” and presented a “particularly grave fire hazard.” The school moved to Caffin Avenue in the Lower Ninth Ward in 1928, and at some point after that the former Macarty Plantation House was torn down.³⁹ The Sanborn Map for 1937 shows smaller residences facing the 3800 blocks of Royal and Chartres. The space in the center where the school formerly stood is covered over with paper, but one can still discern the shape of the building labeled “McCarthy School (colored).”⁴⁰

McDonogh School no. 12 was replaced in 1940 by the new Francis T. Nicholls School for white boys. It was racially integrated in the 1960s.

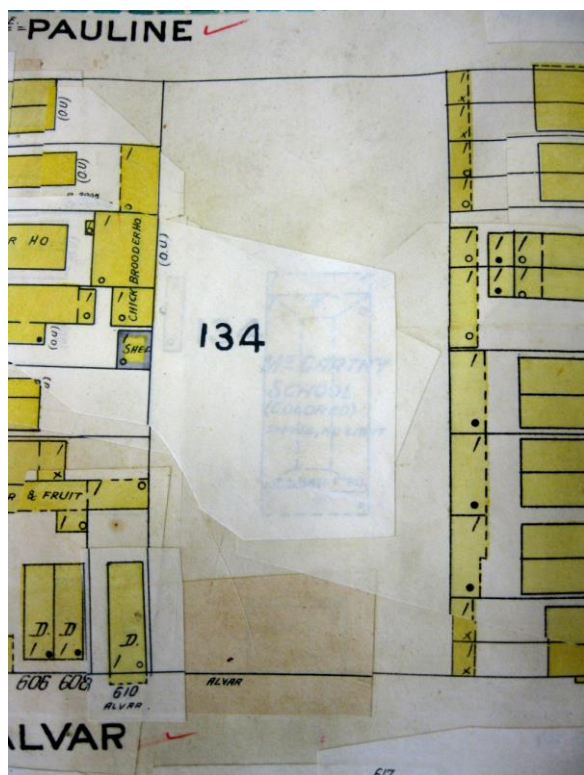


Figure 14
 Sanborn Map 1937, volume 1, sheet 909, square 134, showing that the Macarty School had been demolished, as indicated by the fact that it is covered over with paper. Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University

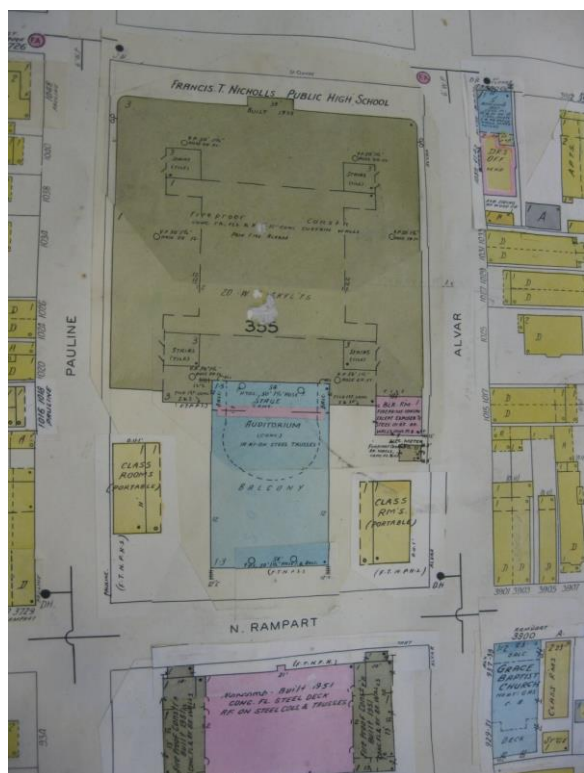


Figure 15
 Sanborn Map 1937, vol. 1, sheet 909, Francis T. Nicholls Public High School in square 355 bounded by Pauline, St. Claude, Alvar, and North Rampart. The field house was on the other side of North Rampart. Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University.

Following a move to eradicate the names of former slave owners from the New Orleans public schools, in the late 1990s the Nicholls School became the Frederick Douglass School and is now a part of the KIPP Family Schools as KIPP New Orleans Leadership Academy.⁴¹

Evidence from newspaper articles, city directories, and maps definitely show that the original Macarty Plantation House became the Macarty School and survived until sometime after 1927. It did not collapse into the river like George Washington Cable's "Belles Demoiselles." It is true, however, that the entire Mississippi River bank in the lower neighborhoods of New Orleans was becoming unstable. Even in 1859, when the Macarty Plantation was being subdivided and the main house was retained for a school, an article in the *Daily Picayune* described the "inroads made by the river...as far down as Macarty's Plantation." Water was "flowing over the levee" near the Lower Cotton Press, and in other places "the Mississippi is on a level with the bank—a rather uncomfortable height when we think of how much higher the bank is than the street."⁴² But it does not appear that entire blocks were washed away in the later nineteenth century. The 1883 Robinson's Atlas shows North Peters Street (formerly Levee) nearest the river, and the 1893 Sanborn map still shows North Peters running along the "protection levee," with an entire block between North Peters and Chartres occupied by industrial uses such as wood yards, an excavating company, and a brewery. The configuration of the land is the same in 1896, and a cistern factory, a sausage factory, and an ice manufacturing plant have been added. North Peters was still there in 1908, but it ceased to exist in the later twentieth century when the land between Chartres and the river was taken for railroad tracks, warehouses, and wharfs, leaving Chartres as the street nearest the Mississippi.

By the early twentieth century the neighborhood, a mix of industrial, agricultural, and residential uses then known as the Upper Ninth Ward, was populated by working-class black and white Americans and immigrants living in modest shotgun houses and some residences that were more grand. In 1940 the Alvar Street Branch of the New Orleans Public library was erected on the site of the former Macarty School on land still owned by the city.⁴³

The neighborhood became known as "the Bywater" in 1947. By the 1970s, artists and musicians were moving into the inexpensive housing, but at the same time the crack cocaine epidemic made it a dangerous place to live. Since Hurricane Katrina, the Bywater has experienced a wave of gentrification that is considered both beneficial and detrimental to the neighborhood. More affluent, better-educated, mostly white newcomers have bought and renovated the old houses and painted them in eye-popping colors. The streets are cleaner and safer. There are new shops, restaurants, and art galleries. On the other hand, long-time residents complain about home prices and rents that have more than tripled, and make disparaging remarks about the invasion of "hipsters." The blighted post-industrial area along the river is gradually disappearing, as some buildings are razed and some are converted to residential or commercial uses. In 2014 the beautifully landscaped "Crescent Park" was opened along the river between Montegut and Mazant streets. The main entrance is across from what was once

the Macarty Plantation and an iron footbridge called the “Rusty Rainbow” crosses over the railroad tracks and flood wall further up the river at Piety Street.

Notes

1. Marriage contract between Luis Bartolomé Macarty and Maria Juana Lerable, widow of Charles le Comte, July 3, 1776, Acts of Juan Garic, vol. 7, p. 196, Notarial Archives Research Center (hereafter NARC). The marriage is missing from the sacramental register of St. Louis Cathedral.
2. Sale of plantation of twelve arpents fronting the river by forty arpents depth, with buildings, livestock, and twenty-four slaves, by Juan Bautista Buenvenu to Luis Macarty and wife Maria Juana Lerable for 35,000 piastres, Acts of Raphael Perdomo, November 4, 1785, vol. 6, p. 635. Sale of plantation of four arpents fronting the river by forty arpents depth by Pedro de la Roche to Luis Macarty for 7,000 piastres, Acts of Francisco Broutin, January 17, 1794, vol. 30, p. 3. Sale of plantation of six arpents fronting the river by forty arpents depth, with buildings, by Joseph Bonneville to Luis Macarty for 7,468 piastres, Acts of Pierre Pedesclaux, February 12, 1794, vol. 20, p. 139. All citations from NARC.
3. Baptism of Maria Delfina de Macarty, St. Louis Cathedral/White Persons (hereafter SLC/WP), December 26, 1793, unnumbered volume for 1786-1796, part 3, p. 291, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans (hereafter AANO). The baptism of Louis Barthélémy *filis* is missing from the sacramental register.
4. See Carolyn Morrow Long, *Madame Lalaurie, Mistress of the Haunted House* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 89-108, for more about the fire and the rescue of the slaves.
5. See Long, *Madame Lalaurie*, 37-52, for more on the settlement of the Blanque estate.
6. Plan dated June 23, 1825, attached to “Registration and Deposit by Hugon in the name of L.B. Macarty” (partition of property by the heirs of Louis Chevalier Macarty), Acts of Marc Lafitte, October 22, 1825, vol. 28, p. 354, NARC.
7. Sale of land by Mad^e V^{ve} Blanque to Mad^e Marie Azelie Zeringue épouse de M^r Joseph Lombard *filis*, Acts of Hugues Lavergne, October 24, 1825, vol. 17, act 3269, NARC.
8. S. Frederick Starr, *Une Belle Maison: The Lombard Plantation House in New Orleans's Bywater* (University Press of Mississippi, 2013).
9. See Long, *Madame Lalaurie*, 53-71, for more on the complicated relationship between Delphine Macarty and Louis Lalaurie.
10. Marriage Contract between Delphine Macarty and Louis Lalaurie, Acts of Felix de Armas, January 12, 1828, vol. 13, act 43, p. 4-5, NARC.
12. Marriage of Leonard Louis Nicolas Lalaurie and Marie Delphine Macarty, SLC/WP, January 12, 1828, vol. 4, part 2, act 505, p. 111, Archives and Records of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

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12. Sale of land by Delphine Macarty, wife of Lalaurie, to Louis Donnet and Martin Duralde, for 13,750 piastres, Acts of Felix de Armas, January 26, 1828, vol. 13, act 94, NARC.
13. Description of previous undeveloped condition of the tract is from "Registration and Deposit by Hugon in the name of L.B. Macarty," Acts of Marc Lafitte, October 22, 1825, vol. 28, p. 354, NARC.
14. Parish Court, docket no. 7544, Martin Duralde v His Creditors, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.
16. Starr, *Une Belle Maison*, 35-37, 88.
16. Plan by J.A. d'Hemecourt, January 17, 1849, attached to a mortgage from Citizens' Bank to the Cotton Press, Acts of Charles Bodousquie, March 15, 1849, NARC.
17. Robinson's Atlas, 1883, plate 20, NARC. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for New Orleans, 1893, vol. 4, sheet 148; 1896, vol. 4, sheet 348; 1908, vol. 1, sheet 34, Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division.
18. See, for example, "Lightweights Will Top Olympic Show Monday," *Times-Picayune* Sports Section, June 21, 1931; "Casseboone, McNamara Will Box Monday Night," *Times-Picayune* Sports Section, August 2, 1931. There are similar articles from 1931. These sources were accessed through GenealogyBank.com using "619 Congress" as a search term.
19. Roulhac Toledano, Sally Kittredge Evans (now Reeves), Mary Louise Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture: The Creole Faubourgs* (Pelican, 1984), 22.
20. Charles Gayarré, "Barthélémy de Macarty's Revenge," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (January 1890), 278-82.
21. See Long, *Madame Lalaurie*, 125-27, for more about Louis Barthélémy Macarty and his relationship with Eugenie Adelaide Gormans.
22. Civil death certificate for Louis Barthélémy Macarty, December 4, 1846, Orleans Parish Deaths, vol. 11, p. 238, Louisiana State Archives.
23. Will of Louis Barthélémy Macarty, Acts of Octave de Armas, September 19, 1846, vol. 39, act 140, NARC.
24. Inventory of the estate of Louis Barthélémy Macarty, Acts of Octave de Armas, December 9-21, 1846, vol. 39, act 192, NARC.
25. "Judicial Sales--Estate of the late Louis Barthélémy Macarty," May 14, 1847, *New Orleans Bee*, May 14, 1847, p. 2, c. 6 and 7.
26. Sale of the property of the late Louis Barthélémy Macarty by the Sheriff of Orleans Parish to John McDonogh for 41,250 piastres, Acts of Octave de Armas, May 28, 1847, vol. 40, act 122, NARC.
27. Will of John McDonogh, December 29, 1838; 1851 published edition available through "Making of

America," <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moa&cc=moa&xc=1&idno=abk9835.0001.001&g=moagrp&q1=McDonogh&frm=frameset&view=image&seq=3>.

28. Donald Devore and Joseph Logsdon, *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans 1841-1991* (1991), 33.

29. Sale of Macarty property from the estate of John McDonogh, Acts of Eusebe Bouny, May 10, 1859, vol. 5, acts 171-178, NARC. Some of the lots are illustrated in Plan Book 67, folio 31, "McDonogh's Property, 30 lots of Ground, Third District, Macarty's Place."

30. "Sale of the McDonogh Estate," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 28, 1859, p. 2.

31. "The Dismemberment of the Macarthy Plantation," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 11, 1859, p. 1.

32. "Superintendent of Public Schools," *Daily Picayune*, June 17, 1865, p. 5; "The Public Schools," *New Orleans Times*, June 5, 1866, p. 2; "Board of School Directors," *Daily Picayune*, January 10, 1867, p. 2.

33. "Wayside Notes," *New Orleans Item*, August 10, 1879, p. 1; "The Most Remarkable Schoolhouse in the World," *Item*, October 20, 1879, p. 2. Although not signed by Lafcadio Hearn, the style indicates that both articles were his work.

34. "Local Jottings," *Daily Picayune*, August 15, 1880, p. 3.

35. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for New Orleans, 1893, vol. 4, sheet 146; Sanborn Map, 1896, vol. 4, sheet 346; Sanborn Map, 1908, vol. 1, sheet 36.

36. "M'Donogh No. 12-Finding the Location of the New School," *Daily Picayune*, July 29, 1879, p. 1; "The Schools," *Daily Picayune*, November 10, 1880, p. 1. *Reports of the Boards of Commissioners for the McDonogh School Fund 1892-1895* (1896), 28-29; accessed through GoogleBooks. The picture of McDonogh 12 is reproduced on the website http://www.old-new-orleans.com/NO_McDonogh_Schools.html.

37. Frederick Starr wrote, in the April, 2005, issue of *Preservation in Print* (p. 18), that "'Belles Demoiselles Plantation' revolves around the Macarty Plantation In 1893...the Mississippi River suddenly ate away an entire block separating Plantation Guillaume/Lombard from the river....This natural event replicates the apocalyptic fictional end that Cable gave to his novel of the nearby Macarty Plantation." Cable might have been inspired by the fate of a plantation in the uptown Carrollton section of New Orleans owned by another branch of the Macarty family, which was destroyed when the river broke through the levee in 1816. In *Une Belle Maison* (p. 7), Starr wrote that "By the year 1899, [location] was to prove fatal to nearly every building that stood near the Mississippi's bank, including the old Macarty place."

38. George Washington Cable, *Old Creole Days* (1879, reprint Pelican 1991), 41-66. Lafcadio Hearn, "The Scenes of Cable's Romances," *Century Magazine* (1883), 46-47.

39. "Fire Hazards to be Eliminated from Schools," *Item*, May 28, 1921, p. 13. "Proposal, Orleans Parish School Board...for McCarty School," *Times-Picayune*, April 18, 1928, p. 28.

40. The "McCarthy" School for "colored boys and girls" first appeared in Gardner's *New Orleans Directory* in 1867 and continued to be listed in Soard's *New Orleans Directory* at 621 Pauline Street until 1927. The

school also appears in Robinson's Atlas, 1883, sheet 20, square 134; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1893, vol. 4, sheet 146 and 148; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1896, vol. 4, sheet 348; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908, vol. 1, sheet 34; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for 1937, vol. 1, sheet 909.

41. https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=kipp+new+orleans.

42. "Filtration," *Daily Picayune* April 28, 1859, p. 2.

43. "Branch Library Dedicated with Praise for WPA —Speakers Laud Past Efforts of McDonogh and Carnegie," *Times-Picayune*, November 7, p. 18. The reference to McDonogh acknowledges his donation of the Macarty Plantation land to the city to be used for public schools.