THE ROLE OF BLACKS IN SPANISH ALABAMA: THE MOBILE DISTRICT, 1780-1813

by

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As a research topic gradually unfolds, problems of terminology invariably arise. While trying to avoid the semantic pitfall of using such terms as "colored" or "Negro" to describe blacks in colonial Alabama, this researcher unwittingly antagonized the "fair sex." Presenting a paper on "The Status of Black Men in Spanish Alabama, two black *female* scholars immediately raised the question of my male chauvinism. The point is well taken. Blacks in colonial Alabama included both men and women. This term, "Blacks", is further broadened to include slave and free, mulatto and Negro.

As for the Mobile District, this political division of Spanish West Florida was created following the capture of Fort Charlotte by Spanish forces led by Bernardo de Galvez in 1780. The boundaries were vaguely defined, due in part to the conflicting claims of Indians, the United States, Spain, and even the state of Georgia. Everyone seemed to agree that the Gulf of Mexico was the southern boundary. The eastern boundary with Florida was set at the Perdido River, and the western line lay along the Pearl River. The northern boundary of the Mobile District fused with the conflicting claims of the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks on the one hand; and with the Tennessee settlements of the Holston and Cumberland Rivers on the other. In addition to Mobile, Spain had settlements at Dauphin Island, Biloxi, Pascagoula, Bay St. Louis, and the offshore islands.

For two decades prior to its acquisition by Spain in 1780 Mobile was included in the British Province of West Florida, that often-neglected "Fourteenth Original Colony" of America. For centuries the Gulf coast of the United States had been the scene of international rivalries. The end result was to give the area a polyglot, heterogeneous population composed of Canadians,

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Frenchmen, Spaniards, British subjects from England, Scotland and Ireland, Latin Americans, and a wide variety of blacks Guadaloupe. In many ways the population resembled that of from Africa or the Islands of Santo Domingo, Martinique or neighboring Pensacola.[1]

After the American Revolution Mobile was governed by a commandant subject to the orders of the governor-general of Louisiana and West Florida at New Orleans. Spain stretched her colonial laws and customs to fit conditions along coastal Alabama and Mississippi. The basis of colonial law was the *Recopilacion de leyes de los reinos de Indias,* which drew its ancient legal precepts from a vast body of Spanish laws, especially the *Siete Partidas* of the historian-lawyer-king Alfonso X (1252-1284).[2]

Governor Alexander O'Reilly established firm Spanish control of Louisiana in 1769 with the promulgation of various decrees and edicts taken from these ancient guidelines. But in many respects, he allowed operational laws and customs of the French to persist in Spanish Louisiana.[3] One of these referred to blacks: the *Code Noir.* First promulgated in France in 1724, the "Black Code" was applied to Spanish Louisiana by O'Reilly on August 27, 1769.[4]

As the French had utilized black troops in their military reorganized the Negro and white militia units for the various campaigns, so O'Reilly continued the practice. In addition, he

[1] *Cf.* the Census of 1820 for Pensacola, analyzed in Jack D. L. Holmes, "Pensacola: Spanish Dominion, 1781-1821," in *Colonial Pensacola,* edited by James R. McGovern (Pensacola, 1972), 97.

[2] *Recopilacion de leyes de los reinos de las Indias* . . . . (5th ed.; 4 vols.; Madrid, 1841). For scholarly analyses of Louisiana law, see Henry P. Dart, "Influence of the Ancient Laws of Spain on the Jurisprudence of Louisiana," *Journal of the American Bar Association,* XVIII (1932), 125-129; and C. Russell Reynolds, "Alfonso el Sabio's Laws Survive in the Civil Code of Louisiana," *Louisiana History,* XII (Spring, 1971), 137-147.

[3] Jack D. L. Holmes, "Some Irish Officers in Spanish Louisiana," *The Irish Sword,* VI (Winter, 1964), 234-240.

[4] A copy is in the Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), MS Tomo 19,246 folio 100. An edition of the *Code Noir* was also published in New Orleans by Antoine Boudousquie in 1778, from the decree issued May 14, 1777. Parsons Collection, Humanities Research Center, University of Texas. A summary in English appears in Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (4 vols.; New Orleans and Paris, 1904), I, 87-94.

districts and New Orleans.[5] The subsequent modification of laws and regulations in Louisiana and West Florida was dictated by the process of trial and error. Thus, following the abortive slave revolt at Pointe Coupee, Louisiana in 1795, the governor-general, Francisco Luis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, issued a new, more stringent slave code in an effort to keep slaves under control. He also decreed the closing of the slave trade, a step which his successors suspended because of the demand for additional Negro slaves to work the fields in Louisiana and West Florida.[6]

After Mobile became Spanish, the commandants and lesser officials were ordered to compile careful census reports for their respective districts, to include the heads of families, marital status, number of children and slaves they had, and their ownership of plantations and production of livestock and crops. From these census records we may derive demographic details on the distribution of blacks in the Mobile District. John Linder, Sr., a Swiss by birth, who had immigrated to the lush valleys of the Tensaw and Tombigbee Rivers during the American Revolution, was named justice of the peace for the District of Tensaw and Tombigbee.[7] In his "Liste des Habitans" for the Tensaw, which he compiled on July 27, 1785, he shows for the whites, 46 men, 23 women, and 54 children. There were 64 male Negro slaves, 49 female Negro slaves, and 46 Negro children.[8]

In the first general *padron,* or census for the Mobile District, compiled by Pedro de Favrot, the commandant at Mobile in 1786, he lists eight categories of people by name, with the exception of the Negro slaves.[9] A year later, he compiled an-

[5]Holmes, "Some Irish Officers," 237. O'Reilly appointed Pedro Simon, a free Mulatto, to head the militia of his race February 24, 1770. On the use of blacks and mulattoes by the French in Louisiana, see Roland C. McConnell, *Negro Troops of Antebellum Louisiana, a History of the Battalion of Free Men of Color* (Baton Rouge, 1968), 3-14.

[6]Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Abortive Slave Revolt at Pointe Coupée, Louisiana, 1795," *Louisiana History,* XI (Fall, 1970), 354-357.

[7]Information on Linder is contained in Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Tensaw Settlement in Colonial Times," Unpublished paper read to the Alabama Academy of Science, April 6, 1968, to be incorporated in the author's forthcoming "Alabama Settlers, 1780-1813."

[8]The document is from the Archivo General de Indias (Sevilla, Spain), Papeles procedentes de la Isla de Cuba, legajo 198 (hereafter cited as AGI, PC).

other *padron,* which is less complete, but shows a very gradual growth in white population, but a significant increase in the number of Negro slaves.[10] Fevrot was succeeded by the brilliant administrator and military leader, Vicente Folch y Juan, who in turn compiled a *padron* of the Mobile District for 1788.[11] This census also shows a small increase in all categories.[12] The next general census report for the Mobile District encountered by this writer was that prepared by Commandant Francisco Maximiliano de St. Maxent on September 12, 1805.[13] It shows a large decrease in all categories, probably due to the loss of the heavily-populated Tensaw and Tombigbee valleys to the United States between 1797 and 1799. A chart identifies the numbers of each category:

FIGURE 1
POPULATION OF THE MOBILE DISTRICT
1785-1805

Category	*1785*	*1786*	*1788*	*1805*
White men	114	112	144	226
White women	78	84	96	154
White children	254	245	318	293
Free mulattoes	47	49	69*	205
Free Negroes	14	15	*	45
Mulatto slaves	70	86	?	69
Male Negro slaves	321	639#	767&	307
Negress slaves	251	#	&	236

* Figures not separated by Mulatto-Negro, but by sex: 27 free colored men, 38 free colored women, and four free colored children.
# The Negro slaves are not separated by sex. The total is 639.
& Negro slaves are not separated by sex. The total is 767.

[9]Pedro de Favrot, Padron of the Mobile District for 1785, Mobile, January 1, 1786, AGI, PC, leg. 2360.

[10]Pedro de Favrot, Padron of the Mobile District for 1786, Mobile, January 1, 1787, AGI, PC, leg. 2361.

[11]Vicente Folch y Juan, Padron of the Mobile District for 1788, Mobile, March 15, 1789, AGI, PC, leg. 202. On Folch, see Jack D. L. Holmes, "Spanish Military Commanders in Colonial Alabama," *Journal of the Alabama Academy of Science,* XXXVII (January, 1966), 56-57.

[12]Slightly different figures on the 1788 census appear in the general census compiled by Esteban Miro in 1788, AGI, PC, leg. 1425-A. By Miro's record, there were 777 men and 676 women for a total population in the district of 1,453. There were 257 male whites and 185 female whites (broken into three age groups). Free mulattoes and Negroes amounted to 49 men and 39 women, while Negro slaves included 471 men and 452 women.

[13]Francisco Maximiliano de St. Maxent, General Census for the Mobile District, Mobile, September 12, 1805, AGI, PC, leg. 142-A.

Lieutenant-colonel Juan de la Villebeuvre, as commandant of the fort and district of San Esteban de Tombecbe (St. Stephens) in 1797, listed the settlers there in a valuable *padron* or census report. A total of seventy-eight white settlers reported owning fifty-two male and forty-five female Negro slaves as of April 16, 1797.[14]

Information concerning the introduction of Negro slaves into colonial Alabama is also available by checking the lists of new immigrants. Thus, in 1791 when a large number of prominent settlers agreed to sign a loyalty oath to Spain, the commandant included data on the size of their families and the number of slaves. Such notable early families in Alabama as the Boykin, Bassett, Burnett, and Sizemore heads of family signed the oath.[15] One list indicates that the whites were thirty-four men, thirteen women, and forty-three children. They brought with them sixteen male Negro slaves, seven Negress slaves, and nineteen Negro slave children.[16]

Religious reports add to extant knowledge of the spread of black colonials. When Bishop Cirilo de Barcelona made his pastoral visit to Mobile and Pensacola in 1791, he listed the settlers and their slaves. For Pensacola, he was more detailed, showing that of the 572 settlers there, 292 were white Catholics; 119, black Catholics; 47, white Protestants; and 114 black Protestants. Of the 733 "souls" in the Mobile District, he reported 258 were white of all ages and sexes. The remaining 475 settlers were blacks (including free and slave, all black and mulatto). The Tombigbee and Tensaw settlements were given separately, but with no racial breakdown.[17]

As a result of the abortive slave revolt at Pointe Coupee in 1795, new records were filed. Planters in that Louisiana settle-

[14]Juan de la Villebeuvre, Census of the District of San Esteban de Tombecbé, Fort San Esteban de Tombecbé, April 16, 1797, AGI, PC, leg. 64. See Jack D. L. Holmes (comp.), "1797 Alabama Census According to Spanish Records," *Alabama Genealogical Register*, VIII (September, 1966), 123-124.

[15]The list is in AGI, PC, leg. 122-B. Other lists are in *ibid.*, leg. 52.

[16]Unsigned list of newly-arrived families to the Tensaw District, Mobile, May 2, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 122-B.

[17]Expediente concerning the pastoral report of Bishop Cirilo de Barcelona to Antonio Porlier (Minister of State), New Orleans, May 18 and 28, 1791, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo 2531. A copy is in the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

ment lost more than a score of slaves as a result of execution, exile or imprisonment. Hoping to alleviate their loss, Governor-general Carondelet urged the planters of Louisiana and West Florida to volunteer a fixed fee for each slave they owned. This money would be placed in a fund and allotted to the planters on a proportional basis for their losses.[18] Mobile's report, drawn up on December 31, 1795, showed that a total of twenty-nine planters owned a total of 192 slaves. The list also included planters at Dauphin Island, Pascagoula, Bay St. Louis, and Fish and Dog Rivers. The general total of *all* planters was forty-nine, and they owned 284 slaves. The merchant, John Joyce had 28; the Widow Rochon, 32. Most planters owned just a few slaves. Of the twenty-nine Mobile planters, only nineteen agreed to contribute to the fund. Even the wealthy Widow Rochon with the most slaves declined to contribute. In the rest of the district twenty planters owning ninety-two slaves apparently agreed with the widow—thanks to them the plan was *not* working! Since the fees were to be voluntary, the government did not press the matter, but the names of those who refused were published.[19]

Statistics are a useful tool upon which to build various factual statements regarding slavery in colonial Alabama, but they are, in the final analysis, less than inspired. Closer examination of the colonial records during the Spanish dominion of Alabama does reveal something of the contemporary mores involving such subjects as the rights of free and slave blacks, participation in military units, open-housing, mobility, civil rights, religion and miscegenation.

Mobile church records show an unusually high incidence of intermarriage among the black, white, and mulatto settlers of Mobile. A good illustration of this centers around the prominent Chastang family whose members lived north of Mobile along the Tensaw and Tombigbee Rivers. Dr. John Chastang, a prominent surgeon who served as the earliest medical consultant at Fort San Esteban de Tombecbe, lived in his mansion near the fort called Harigay Hall. His concubine, Luisa, was a free Negress, native of Mobile. Dr. Chastang and Luisa were the

[18]Concerning the Pointe Coupée revolt, see Holmes, "The Abortive Revolt," cited *supra*, note 6. See also, "Lista de los habitantes . . . que tienen esclavos" (List of settlers owning slaves), Mobile, December 31, 1795, AGI, PC, leg. 212-B.

[19]*Ibid.*

parents of a number of natural and illegitimate children, all of whom were recognized by the father. Basilio (or Basile) Chastang, one of the natural sons, was married to Desiree Laurent, also a product of a mixed liaison between Bartolomeo Laurent and the free mulattress, Luisa. Basilio was a registered cattleman at St. Stephens and a corporal in the mulatto militia of Mobile. His brother, Zenon, likewise a mulatto, was married to Maria Teresa Bernoudy, a mulatto and natural daughter of Regis Bernoudy and of Isabel, a free negress. He was also an early "black cowboy" in the Mobile District. The family was a large, cattle raising, close-knit group who apparently enjoyed social distinction, if not because of their interracial marriages, at least in spite of them.[20]

Numerous prominent families of the Mobile District were intermarried with free blacks and mulattoes. This was not as unusual as it might seem, for intermarriage and concubinage were facts of life in colonial Louisiana and West Florida. As Bishop Luis Penalver y Cardenas wrote in 1799, repeating his irate complaints of 1795, "They," referring to the military officers, "live openly with their mulatto concubines as do many of the people, and they are not ashamed to name the children in the parish registers as their natural children."[21] Indeed, as the historian John F. Watson pointed out after a visit to New Orleans in 1804-1805, ". . . Visit the churches when you will, and the chief of the audience is formed of mulattresses and negresses—the chief devotees seem to be the concubines; in truth, they are a good race of women; they are faithful ones who never desert their *maris* (or supporters) in any case of

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[20]Data on the Chastang family, sometimes appearing in the records as "Sartan," was collected from numerous sources including marriage, death and birth records of the Parish of Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion (Mobile), Chancellor's Office, Mobile; livestock brands for the San Esteban District, compiled in 1795 by Commandant Lieutenant Antonio Palao for ten different members of that family, AGI, PC, leg. 222-B; militia records, Mobile, 1800, AGI, PC, leg. 71-B. Other families showing mixing include Garcia, Pendargrast (Pendergast?), Andry, Lalanda, and Colem.

[21]Joseph Antonio Caballero to Antonio Coruel (Cornel?), San Lorenzo, November 13, 1799, in James Alexander Robertson (ed.), *Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807* (2 vols.; Cleveland, 1911), I, 356. A similar complaint appears in Bishop Luis's report dated New Orleans, November 1, 1795, Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), Ms Vol. 19,509, folios 24-27, for which there is a summary in Jack D. L. Holmes, "*Dramatis Personae* in Spanish Louisiana," *Louisiana Studies,* VI (Summer, 1967), 150-151.

adversity. They do not marry, because custom holds that to be odious; but *that* not being their fault, they are, in all respects, good as wives in general, frugal in their habits and innocent in their lives and deportment . . . They are not unlike the worthy concubines of old . . . Their whole deportment in them [the quadroon balls] is chaste and civil . . ."[22]

Under the law, free blacks and mulattoes enjoyed equal rights with their white neighbors, although discrimination, personal slights, prejudice, and other marks of poor breeding were omnipresent in the past, as today. One example may give some idea of how far the Spanish government would go to protect the rights of its colored vassals. A free mulattress in Mobile, Catherine Durand, complained in 1795 that three soldiers from the Louisiana Infantry Regiment's Third Battalion had stolen two handkerchiefs from her. Tried by a court martial in Pensacola, the soldiers were found not guilty. In reviewing the case, however, Governor-general Carondelet in his capacity as Inspector-General of all the armies in Louisiana and West Florida, refused to accept the decision of the court martial. The entire matter was sent to the Supreme Council of War in Spain with Carondelet's objections to the way the case had been handled to "white wash" the guilty parties. Perhaps two handkerchiefs is a tempest in a teapot, but the principle of legal and juridical equality of free blacks and mulattoes emerges loud and clear.[23]

Spanish Alabama offers a marked contrast to race relations in early American Alabama. Slaves, for example, if they lived in the days of the Spanish Dons, were amply protected from physical abuse at the hands of their masters. Should a master treat a black slave with cruelty, he could petition the government to be transferred to another owner. Bristol, a black slave, who had suffered a cut hand and gangrene, was treated at Mobile's Royal Hospital in 1793. Since his former master, Josef Domingo, had died, Thomas Comis lay claim to the black man. Rather than accompany his "new" master, Bris-

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[22]John F. Watson, "Notitia of Incidents at New Orleans in 1804 and 1805," *American Pioneer*, II (May, 1843), 234, 236.

[23]The suit is cited in Carondelet to Luis de las Casas, New Orleans, April 30, 1795, AGI, PC, leg. 1443-B.

tol fled, and the commandant of Tensaw, Juan Queler, approved the action.[24]

Negro slaves were often called upon to testify in cases involving white men. When Cornelius Rain, Jr. complained to John Linder that one John Ballard had stolen two of his Negroes, Ballard was jailed in Pensacola, and the commandant, Colonel Arturo O'Neill, interrogated the Negroes concerned. "My home was Guinea," testified Dick, "but I don't know what religion I am." He explained that he had run away from his master in Charleston and joined Ballard of his own free will. Jack, the other black man, was also a runaway. The case was finally settled when Ballard paid Rain the sum of $180, and the blacks eagerly returned to Ballard who had shown them compassion and friendship.[25]

Cruelty to slaves or the degradation felt by the unnatural condition of slavery, often forced the blacks to escape. They were then called "cimarrones" or "cimarrons" and there was a price placed on their head. If they were captured, however, they could testify in their own behalf before the civil or military commandant of the district. A generation or two later, the United States would split over the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Laws which excluded just such testimony.[26]

It must not be considered that because slavery was more benign in Spanish Louisiana, Alabama, or Natchez, that it was a fine situation. As in the United States, retribution against slaves who dared to assault their masters was swift and cruel, and in most cases an "example" was made to other slaves. When two blacks in Louisiana whipped their master and set his hayloft on fire, they were tried and convicted. On June 20, 1771, they were dragged behind horses before being hanged. Then they were drawn and quartered. Governor Luis de Unzaga explained the cruel punishment: "The realization that these negroes have impressed upon me, and other things of less importance which are happening everday among the negroes, has given me to understand that quick, active and very severe action

[24]Juan Queler (Keller?) to Manuel de Lanzos, Tinza (Tensaw), September 23, 1793, AGI, PC, leg. 123.

[25]The case is contained in a large dossier (*expediente*) in AGI, PC, leg. 169.

[26]See the case of the runaways, Luis and Enrique, who were tried at Mobile before the commandant, Vicente Folch, March 9, 1789, AGI, PC, leg. 172-A.

must be taken against them, and they must be treated with all the severity of our laws, recalling, at the same time, that our laws are not so harsh as those in force among the French here . . ."[27]

Spanish judicial officers did not hestitate to torture blacks who were accused of crimes in an effort to make them confess. Thus, in 1778 when Clement and Jacobo, two black slaves, were accused of murder and robbery, both were tortured. Clement confessed, was executed in the Plaza de Armas, and his body place in a sack and dumped in the Mississippi. Jacobo, tortured by fire, refused to confess, and was found guilty only of theft. He was given 200 lashes at the foot of the New Orleans gallows.[28]

In general, the slave regulations were the same for Alabama as for Louisiana. Liquor was not to be sold to blacks, nor given to them. In order to prevent theft, no one was permitted to buy goods from blacks unless the slaves had written permission from their masters. Firearms, unless by special permit, were forbidden to slaves. Slaves who wandered more than three miles from their plantation without written permission from their masters, were considered as runaways. Whites apprehending such "cimarrones" and returning them to their masters were entitled to be paid $2.00 for stopping the black and four bits for every league he passed in returning him. Settlers who violated the regulations could be fined and jailed.[29]

It is a safe assumption that it was a rare black man or woman who felt that slavery was the best of all possible worlds. Yet, the status of the free blacks and mulattoes was infinitely

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[27]Unzaga to Antonio Maria Bucarely y Ursua, No. 157, New Orleans, June 22, 1771. A slightly different translation appears in W. P. A., *Dispatches of the Spanish Governors of Louisiana* (5 books of 5 vols. each; New Orleans, 1937-1938), Book I, Vol. III, p. 43.

[28]Laura L. Porteous (ed. and trans.), "Index to Spanish Judicial Records of Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XII, No. 4 (October, 1929), 682.

[29]This regulation is drawn from that of Antonio Palao for the District of San Esteban, April 24, 1795, AGI, PC, leg. 213. For additional laws concerning blacks and liquor, see Jack D. L. Holmes, "Spanish Regulation of Taverns and the Liquor Trade in the Mississippi Valley," in *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley*, edited by John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 159.

better in Spanish Mobile than it was for either slaves, or for their counterparts in the United States, as a general rule.

Black and mulatto labor played an important part in the economic progress of Alabama. A number of free blacks worked as sailors on small craft carrying supplies between Dauphin Island and Mobile.[30] Alexo, a free mulatto, was a male nurse at Mobile's Royal Hospital.[31] Andres, a free Negro, took charge in the care and cleaning of smaller boats in the Mobile coast guard.[32] The Chastang family owned hundreds of head of cattle along the rich pastures of the Tombigbee.[33]

Carlos Lalanda, a prominent mulatto in Mobile, not only commanded the mulatto militia, but in 1811 he was awarded a contract to supply the biscuit and hardtack for the Mobile garrison. This is the same mulatto who bought Belle Fontaine on Mobile Bay in 1796, which added to his land holdings along Dog River, Grand Terre and Tensaw.[34] A free Negress, Louison, appears in the census of 1786. As the baking contractor for Fort San Esteban in 1791, she earned $10 a month, but two years later she asked for an increase in pay due to the increased garrison and double duties. She received $15.[35] Nicholas Mongulas was a free Negro who earned a post with the government as a master mason.[36] When they were needed for labor digging trenches and piling sand-bags on the Mobile levees, blacks were paid at the rate of $1.00 a fathom, while other workers generally earned $8 a month—a respectable sum compared to army pay.[37]

[30]These included Valentin Alexandro, Ambrosio Asmar and Santiago Lacosta. Their official pay records (*asientos*) are in AGI, PC, leg. 538-A.

[31]*Ibid.* Another male nurse was Pedro Moreno. *Ibid.*

[32]*Ibid.* Another in the same line was José Gustavo. *Ibid.*

[33]Among the cattle brands registered at San Esteban during 1795 six were to different Chastangs and 4 to different Sartans. Many of these individuals were black or mulatto. AGI, PC, leg. 222-B.

[34]Contract of Lalanda, AGI, PC, leg. 391; Translated Land Records, Mobile Probate Court, I, 183-184, 190-191, 198-199, 210-211.

[35]Census of 1786, AGI, PC, leg. 2360. Her contracts and petitions are in a large *expediente* with pay records, AGI, PC, leg. 538-A.

[36]Pay record (*asiento*), AGI, PC, leg. 538-A. He is also listed in the 1786 census and was a landowner in Mobile: Translated Land Records, Mobile Probate Court, I, 110-111.

[37]Manuel de Lanzos to Carondelet, Mobile, July 24, 1792, copy enclosed in Carondelet to Luis de las Casas, No. 179, New Orleans, August 28, 1792, AGI, PC, leg. 1441.

Records of Mobile's Parish of the Immaculate Conception were integrated, in contrast to official registers of births, deaths and marriages in other parishes, such as St. Louis in New Orleans. In 1791, when Bishop Cirilo de Barcelona provided the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Mobile District, he confirmed 243 people, of whom 167 were black. On Dauphin Island in May he confirmed an additional seven free and slave blacks and mulattoes.[38] Likewise, in 1798, when Bishop Luis Penalver y Cardenas administered Confirmation in the Mobile District, 342 people received the Sacrament. A large number were black. These confirmation records are integrated with those of whites.[39] A profile of racial relations in Mobile can be traced from a careful examination of these various church records.

Blacks also rendered important military service in the Mobile area. Contemporary blacks in the Southern United States were generally excluded from the militia, but from 1780, when Spain captured Mobile from the British, blacks had demonstrated military skill, hard work and bravery. The British commander at Fort Charlotte, Elias Durnford, deprecated the black troops among his adversaries, claiming such forces could never force the British to surrender. How wrong he was![40]

The first man wounded on March 8, 1780, was a free Negro. Other black heroes were Agustin Renaud (Renato), Pedro Bahy, Jean Me(n)des, and Cupidon Caresce, all of whom fought in the Mobile campaign. They were blacks or mulattoes. Lorenzo Montero, adjutant of the Battalion of Free Black Militia of Havana, was attached to the Royal Artillery Corps at Mobile, where he commanded a cannon in the battery at the time of the Spanish siege. Numerous blacks were granted special silver medals and pensions for their bravery under fire. It is not beyond belief that some black today can claim membership in the Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution, based on

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[38]Confirmations, April 30-May 6, 1791, original records in the Parish of the Immaculate Conception, Mobile Chancellor's Office.

[39]These records are in the archives of St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. See New Orleans Genealogical Research Society (comp.), *Libro primero de confirmaciones de esta parroquia de S. Luis de la Nueva Orleans* (New Orleans, 1967), 74-79.

[40]Durnford's opinion is mentioned in Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile* (Boston, 1879), 254.

the valorous service of one of their ancestors at Mobile or Pensacola.[41]

Following the war black militia units were utilized in the Mobile District to track down runaway slaves and to fight against camps of cimarrons. The Baron of Carondelet wrote in 1792, "The colored people have served during the late war with great valor and usefulness, and in time of peace they are the ones used to pursue the runaway Negro slaves and destroy their camps, which they have established in spots virtually impenetrable to the regular troops."[42]

Militia units in Mobile were kept segregated, much as the Negro and mulatto militia were organized in Cuba and Mexico following the Seven Years' War.[43] In the muster for 1802, Commandant Joaquin de Osorno reported that Captain Carlos Lalanda commanded the black unit with support from Lieutenant Registe Durelle. The command had a first sergeant and twenty-one Negro and Mulatto militiamen who received the same benefits as their white counterparts.[44] Nor were blacks confined to land service. Manuel de Zuniga, a free mulatto who was born in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), fought on the French corsair *El Hennie,* which preyed on belligerent commerce in the Gulf during the naval war of 1798. He earned a full share of the loot.[45]

A look at the land records in the Mobile Probate Court indicates there was no such thing as an artificially-segregated ghetto for blacks in Spanish Mobile, a characteristic also shared by other Spanish settlements along the Gulf. Hard-core discrimination on the basis of race and color were as lacking in Spanish Mobile as they were present in American Mobile, as in-

[41]Activities of these military units are in Jack D. L. Holmes, "Negro Military Organizations in Spanish Louisiana," unpublished paper, read at the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, New York City, October 4, 1968.

[42]Carondelet to Luis de las Casas, No. 100, New Orleans, May 16, 1792, Archivo General de Simancas (Spain), Guerra Moderna, leg. 6925.

[43]Jack D. L. Holmes, *Honor and Fidelity, the Louisiana Infantry Regiment and the Louisiana Militia Companies, 1766-1821* (Birmingham, Alabama, 1965), 54-59.

[44]Manuel de Lanzos, Muster lists of Mobile militia, enclosed in Lanzos to Marques de Casa-Calvo, No. 113, Mobile, July 1, 1800, AGI, PC, leg. 71-B.

[45]Last will and testament of Zuniga, New Orleans, September 19, 1798, Notarial Archives, New Orleans Court House, Vol. XXXII, fols. 725-727.

dicated in studies of recent vintage.[46] If the study of the Spanish Dominion in the Mobile District does nothing else, it indicates alternative life styles regarding racial relations, which may be worthy of emulation in the contemporary era.

[46] Julia F. Smith, "Racial Attitudes in the Old Southwest," in *The Americanization of the Gulf Coast, 1803-1850*, edited by Lucius F. Ellsworth (Pensacola, 1972), 68-77.