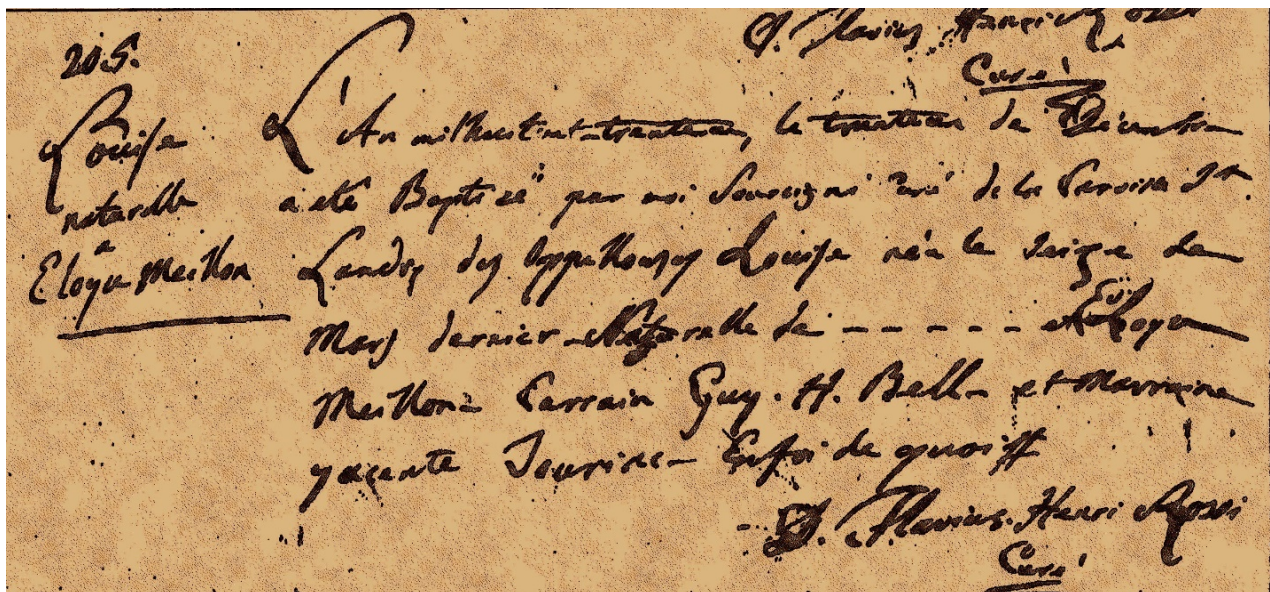


# Famille of Louise Baptiste MEUILLON

An ancestor of mine who I'd like to highlight is Louise Baptiste MEUILLON, a free woman of color born circa 1802 in Louisiana. She passed away on April 27, 1862, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Louise was the daughter of Baptiste MEUILLON (CHEVAL), a free man of color and wealthy planter, born on the estate of Louis Augustin MEUILLON, a prominent planter.

Louise was the mother of my direct ancestor Julie BIROTTE, a free woman of color, and daughter of Francois BIROTTE of New Orleans. The first document I discovered of Louise was her daughter Louise TAURIAC's baptismal entry: MEUILLON, Louise (Eloise MEUILLON) b. 16 Mar. 1831 (Opel. Ch.: v. 3, p. 193). **French:** Louise, naturelle de Eloyce Meillon L'An mil huit centre trente et un, le trentième de décembre, a été baptisée par moi soussigné curé de la Paroisse St Landry ----- Louise née le seize de mars dernier naturelle de ----- et Eloyce Meillon. Parrain Guy H. Bello Marraine Yacinthe Touriac En foi de quoi, Flavius Henri Rossi, curé  
**English Translation:** Louise, natural daughter of Eloyce Meillon on the 30th day of December in the year 1831, was baptized by myself, undersigned priest of St Landry Parish, Louise, born on the 16th of last March, the natural daughter of (omitted) and Eloyce Meillon. Baptismal sponsors Guy H. Bell, Yacinthe (Hyacinthe/Hiacinthe) Touriac in witness whereof. Flavius Henri Rossi, Parish priest. The godparents of her daughter were Judge Guy H. BELL and Hyacinthe TAURIAC. Although the father was omitted, it was later discovered that Louise's father was Louis TAURIAC, the child of Dr. TAURIAC, hence Louis's sister being listed as the godmother.

## Baptismal of Louise TAURIAC





# Louise Baptiste MEUILLON to Francois NEDA

1738

4-11-1846 Microfilm # 019492

L'an Mil huit cent quarante six et le  
 Vingt sixième Jour du mois d' Avril  
 Pardevant Pierre Labiche Notaire public  
 dans et pour la paroisse de St. Landry, diocèse com-  
 missaire, y résidant dans la Ville des Opelousas  
 et en présence des témoins ci-après nommés et  
 soussignés  
 A personnellement comparu Louise B<sup>te</sup> Meillon  
 f. c. l. demeurant dans cette Ville des Opelousas, susdite  
 paroisse de St. Landry, Laquelle a par les présents,  
 fait et constitué pour son mandataire spécial le  
 Sieur Francis Neda demeurant dans cette même  
 Ville des Opelousas, susdite paroisse de St. Landry,  
 auquel elle donne pouvoir de pour elle et en son  
 nom, conduire et accompagner les nouvelles Salines  
 les nommés John h. c. l. son fils, à l'effet de s'y glau-  
 er, appareillages et de lui faire apprendre le métier ou  
 profession dont il aura fait choix -  
 En conséquence et avec effets ci-dessus, Pater et  
 Signer tous actes qui besoin sera, Conduire tous ar-  
 rangements et Prendre tous arrangements engagements  
 nécessaires au nom de la dite constituante susdite,  
 stipuler toutes conditions, Salaires et Lédits, et géni-  
 rellement, faire dans l'intervalle et pour l'avantage dudit  
 mineur John tout ce que, les cas inévitables, promet-  
 tout de l'avoir pour agréable et de le ratifier si besoin  
 est.  
 Dont acte fait et passé dans mes offices aux Ope-  
 lousas, le même jour, mois et an que dessus, en présence  
 des Messrs. Gélidor Dumont et Christophe Médier témoins  
 requis et domiciliés dans cette paroisse de St. Landry,  
 qui ont signé avec nous Notaire susdit et la dite  
 comparante ayant dit l'on ne s'avoit signer ce fait sur  
 marque ordinaire après lecture faite - approuvé, sur  
 mot biffe nul.  
 Coeurme [Signature] Louise B<sup>te</sup> Meillon  
 Gélidor Dumont X  
 Christophe Médier  
 L. Médier [Signature] François Neda  
 Labiche [Signature]

Arrivé au bureau des hypothèques  
 Reg. de l'Union N. 2. p. 499  
 Opelousas 11 avril 1846

There was no direct record indicating Louise's father, but there was one that acknowledged her paternity. On April 11, 1846, Louise, listed as Louise Baptiste MEUILLON, gave consent for her minor son John to go to New Orleans with Francois NEDA as an apprentice to learn a trade or skill of his choice. Although the record never specified John's surname, he was John CHEVIS, the son of John CHEVIS, fils, a free man of color from the Carolinas. This record showed Louise's determination to ensure her son acquired a trade or skill, irrespective of the father's involvement.

Through extensive research, I discovered that all the men who fathered Louise's children were either well-to-do white men or free men of color. They married into prominent families, socially connecting them to the upper crust of free people of color. This had a significant impact on my lineage. While Louise's children and grandchildren advanced, my branch did not fare as well. Julie's son, Leonard LACHAPELLE, moved from Opelousas to rural Grand Prairie. In 1903, Louise TAURIAC's last will and testament revealed the social stratification within my family. Louise TAURIAC, married to Ludger BIROTTE, one of the wealthiest men of color in St. Landry Parish, allotted property to her and her deceased husband's family but made no mention of any inheritance for my family.

Early records show my family was closely involved with their relatives. However, in the late 1800s, my ancestor Theophile LACHAPELLE moved his family to Grand Prairie, Louisiana, where he worked as a blacksmith. This move led to the gradual dissipation of close associations with their affluent in-town cousins. While Leonard's close relatives thrived and married into land-owning Catholic families, Leonard's family married sharecroppers. Records reveal the once close association through their roles as witnesses to marriages and as godparents. However, something occurred that requires further investigation. Oral history suggests Leonard was an alcoholic, with his horse often guiding him home after he was intoxicated. Could alcoholism have been his downfall? Is this why his family became dissociated from their relatives?

A particularly poignant story involves Leonard and his wife, Theresa DONATO, who once raised Leonard BILLEAUDEAU, the son of Theresa's sister. However, his older siblings took him from their care to raise him in a way they believed would better benefit him. As a result, Leonard married into the same family that had previously distanced themselves from Leonard and Theresa's family. While the families acknowledged each other, they did not engage in any business together.

Louise's family, as a collective, demonstrates how many families dissociated themselves to gain societal advantages. After extensively researching my family, I have since reconnected with these relatives. However, I often ask myself: if I weren't the keeper of the records or at least aware of these family connections, would I be accepted? Would my darker complexion be a barrier? Is my level of education sufficient? Would my non-Catholic faith be an issue?

Louise’s story as a single mother during those times always made me imagine what life was like for her carrying the surname of one of the most prominent men in Louisiana’s planter history. Many of her descendants inherited the surname but not the wealth.

**KEYWORD: Natural (Illegitimate)**

## 1850 Census Households of Louise MEUILLON & Children

11	2307	2764	Thidore Holtier	44	M		Confector		4
12			Arthurus	41	f				4
13			Melanie	18	f				4
14			Thidore	17	M				4
15			Justie	14	f				4
16			Alexander	10	f				4
17	2308	2765	Kelley Francisco	30	f	M		South Pa	
18			Antoine	3	M	M		Le	
19			Salvador	1	f	M			4
20	2309	2766	Jean Ste Dapls	26	M	M	Taylor		4
21			Pauline	34	f	M			4
22			Marthe	16	M	M			4
23	2310	2767	Helen Meillon	50	f	M			4
24		2768	Louise Chevis	22	M	M			4
25			Julie Burt	15	f	M			4

### Child of Cadet CHRETIEN & Louise Baptiste MEUILLON:

1. Pauline CHRETIEN was born circa 1819 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She died on 23 Dec 1865 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She was married on 29 Aug 1855 to Jean Baptiste DEFILS, fils, a free man of color, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Jean Baptiste was born circa 1827 in Opelousas, Louisiana to son of Jean Baptiste DEFILS, père, a shoemaker from France & Marie GRADENIGO, a free woman of color, liberated by the GRADENIGO’s. No children were born to this union. On Mar 19, 1853, Manon BALDWIN, a free woman of color, donated Pauline and her husband a house and a lot of property for the special care they were to give to her during her sickness. Pauline and her husband were listed as the godparents of Laura CHEVIS, her niece. This shows how the family of Eloise interacted with each other proving their family connections.

### Child of John CHEVIS, fils, & Louise Baptiste MEUILLON:

2. John Baptiste CHEVIS was born circa 1826 in Opelousas, Louisiana. He died in October 1902 in Opelousas, Louisiana. He was on 12 Nov 1869 to Marcella STRATTON in Opelousas, Louisiana. Marcella was born circa 1834 in Virginia to Andre STRATTON and Martha GOOD. She died on 18 Nov 1916 in Opelousas, Louisiana.





John lived an interesting yet accomplished life. After the Civil War, there was a period known as the "Reconstruction Era" which was the period of the country reestablishing its social order giving people of color their so-called equal rights. During this time, Blacks were now counted as citizens and was given a right to vote by 1867. For the first time in American history, Blacks could now be voted in as both town and State level officials. This new system granted several of my relatives to being part of those first people of color who wrote and governed the laws. On Jul 27, 1868, John constable bond was approved by the St. Landry Parish Police jury which made him become the first Black Constable in the town of Opelousas, Louisiana and possibly in the whole State of Louisiana. After serving as the town's peace officer, in 1872 he was then elected to become part of the town of Opelousas first full Black fire crew along with several pristine men of Color.

Shortly after John's death most of his children moved to the City of New Orleans where they lived as White citizens, many who married into successful and educated families. When I tracked down John's descendants, a few graduated from Harvard, which measures the success of a family who

can trace their roots back to slavery to being part of the elite citizens of today.

**Child of Louis Etienne TAURIAC, fils & Louise Baptiste MEUILLON:**

3. Louise TAURIAC was born on 16 Mar 1831 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She died in November of 1902 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She was married on 6 Jun 1853 to Ludger BIROTTE, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Ludger was born on 4 Jan 1828 in Opelousas, Louisiana to Francois BIROTTE, fils, and Marie Louise GUILLORY, both free people of color. Louise and her husband were two of the wealthiest Creoles of Color in Opelousas

leaving behind a large estate to their nieces and nephews. My ancestor Julie BIROTTE descendants didn't receive anything.

When Louise was baptized it didn't list her nor her mother as being gens de couleur libres. It also revealed that her father's family was involved. Here are the notes from that baptismal: *Source: MEUILLON, Louise (Eloise MEUILLON) b. 16 Mar. 1831 (Opel. Ch.: v. 3, p. 193)*. French: Louise, naturelle de Eloyce Meillon L'An mil huit centre trente et un, le trentième de décembre, a été baptisée par moi soussigné curé de la Paroisse St Landry dy ----- Louise née le seize de mars dernier naturelle de ----- et Eloyce Meillon. Parrain Guy H. Bello Marraine Yacinthe Touriac En foi de quoi, Flavius Henri Rossi, curé English Translation: Louise, natural daughter of Eloyce Meillon on the 30th day of December in the year 1831, was baptized by myself, undersigned priest of St Landry Parish, Louise, born on the 16th of last March, the natural daughter of (omitted) and Eloyce Meillon. Baptismal sponsors Guy H. Bell, Yacinthe (Hyacinthe/Hiacinthe) Touriac in witness whereof. Flavius Henri Rossi, Parish priest.

**Child of Francois BIROTTE, fils & Louise Baptiste MEUILLON:**

4. **Julie BIROTTE** was born circa 1838 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She died in September of 1880 in Opelousas, Louisiana from consumption. She was married on 9 Dec 1851 to Theophile LACHAPELLE, a free man of color, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Theophile, a Blacksmith, was born circa 1829 in Opelousas, Louisiana to Pierre Hubert Langlois dit LACHAPELLE of Quebec, Canada & Josephine TESSON, femme de couleur libre of St. Louis, Missouri. He died on 12 Jun 1886 in Opelousas, Louisiana.

For a long time, I once believed that Julie was the legitimate child of Francois BIROTTE, fils, and his legitimate wife Marie Louise GUILLORY, however, after discovering the proper documentation, it was then revealed that she was the daughter of Louise MEUILLON. This confirmation came from the Courthouse marriage of Theophile and Julie on a little piece of note attached. At first glance I didn't notice it but after it accidentally dropped it not only gave Julie's mother but Theophile's as well. This has forever shown me the importance of obtaining original documents.



# Catholic Marriage of Theophile to Julie

210

Theophile  
 Luchapelle  
 et  
 Julie Birotte

Le au mil huit cent cinquante un et le die de  
 mois de Decembre apres dispons de la publication  
 des bans accorde pour de bannir nos de  
 faite mariage entre Theophile Luchapelle  
 et Julie Birotte, sans aucunement avoir  
 de nous d'entre l'empeschement canonique ou  
 civil, nous prouta soussigné curé de la paroisse  
 St Landry Opelousas avec son libre  
 et mutuel consentement de mariage et en  
 presence des témoins requis nous leur avons  
 donne la benediction nuptiale apres nous  
 estre assurez de la licence d'un greffier de la  
 cour de district. Le foi de quo  
 nous X de Theophile Luchapelle  
 enquis de Julie Birotte.  
 Jean Baptiste Defels

Notre cherie  
 St Donato  
 Siméon Binott  
 J. Binot

ST LANDRY PAROISSE

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**Children of Theophile LACHAPELLE & Julie BIROTTE:**

- a. **Leonard LACHAPELLE** was born on 5 Dec 1852 in Opelousas, Louisiana. He was baptized on 14 Jan 1853 at Saint Landry Catholic Church. His godparents were his maternal Uncle John CHEVIS and his paternal Aunt Basilide LACHAPELLE, both free people of color. On 23 Jun 1869 at the age of 16, with the consent of his father, Leonard was apprenticed to Victor LASTRAPES, a free man of color, to learn the skill of Blacksmithing. He was then married on 10 Jul 1873 to Marie Therese DONATO, a free woman of color, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Theresa was born circa 1848 in Opelousas, Louisiana to Francois Colombe DONATO and Olympe DONATO, both gens de couleur libres.
  - i. **Ernestine LACHAPELLE** was born on 5 May 1874 in Opelousas, Louisiana. She died on the 18 Feb 1958 in Grand Prairie, Louisiana. She was married on 13 Nov 1894 to Francois Jacques LAFLEUR, fils, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Francois was born on 8 Oct 1871 in Grand Prairie, Louisiana to Francois Jacques LAFLEUR, père, and Louisa LA VIOLETTE, both freed slaves. He died on 29 Dec 1942 in Plaisance, Louisiana. Ernestine and her husband both worked for Doctor LAFLEUR. They lived on his farm.
    1. Ellic “T-Lec” LAFLEUR was born on 10 Mar 1900 in Faubourg, Louisiana. He died on 11 Nov 1971 in Opelousas, Louisiana. He was married on 6 Feb 1926 to Elmer THIERRY in Opelousas, Louisiana. Elmer was born on 11 Nov 1907 in Plaisance Louisiana to Louis THIERRY and Maxima Elmer NORMAND. She died in December of 1970 in Opelousas, Louisiana.

T-Lec was a Blacksmith. He was also a known Traiteur in the area. From his gift, he saved the lives of many during his lifetime. Knowing that he was dealing with the poor he didn't charge for his services. Instead, he took food, tool and clothes for the security for him and his family.



## T-Lec LAFLEUR



*Keywords for Black Louisiana Community Circle and Advisory Board Reflections, 2024. Learn more at [keywordsforblacklouisiana.org](https://keywordsforblacklouisiana.org) and [docs.k4bl.org](https://docs.k4bl.org).*