

Document #1745-11-09-03 – Jean Baptiste Marly Cooks for Venus’ Freedom

K4BL Abstract: Jean Baptiste Marly negotiates a contract for his wife Venus’s freedom. He agrees to serve her enslaver Jean Joseph Delfaut de Pontalba, an infantry officer and the commander at Pointe Coupée, as cook for three years. During that time, Pontalba will remain responsible for Venus’s care, providing necessities like food and medicine. After Marly’s three years of service, Venus will be free.

<https://www.lacolonialdocs.org/document/6855>

LHC Card:

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LHC Abstract:

Jean Baptiste Marly, free negro agrees to serve as cook to Jean Jose Delfaut de Pontalbe at Point Coupee for 3 years, for the consideration of the freedom of his wife.

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Names: Black - Jean Baptiste Marly, Venus (Pontalba), Venus (Marly)

Names: White - Augustin Chantalou; Nicolas Henry; Marin le Normant; Jean Joseph Delfaut de Pontalba

Names: Native - n/a

Keywords - contract labor, freedom, foodways, kinship, marriage

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Transcription (French, diplomatic)	Translation (English, modern)
[feuille 1 recto] [digital 2]	[page #1] [digital 2]
[Marginalia:]	[Marginal note:]
1745	1745
9 9 ^{bre}	November 9
marly negre	Marly, <i>nègre</i> ,
Engagement	Engagement
avec pontalba	with Pontalba
Command ^{[an]t}	
f ^o . 29	f ^o . 29
(4096 __.)	(4096 __.)
[Corps:]	[Body:]
(26917.)	(26917.)
fut present En sa personne Jean Baptiste Marly <i>negre</i> Libre Lequel sera volontairement Et sans Contrainte Engagé Envers le Sieur Jean Joseph Delfau de Pontalba officier d'Infanterie + [Command ^{[an]t}] ⁱ a la pointe Coupé[e] pour le servir En qualité de Cuisinier Pendant L'Espace de trois annees Consecutives devolües et acomplies Lesquelles Commenceront a Courir au premier de decembre prochain et finiront a pareil jour p ^{er} [premier] decembre X ^{sept} C	[Before the Council] Jean Baptiste Marly himself, free <i>nègre</i> , voluntarily and without constraint, will serve <i>Sieur</i> Jean Joseph Delfau de Pontalba, infantry officer commanding at Point Coupée, as a cook for a period of three consecutive years, allotted and completed, which will begin on the first [day] of next December and will finish on the same day, December first, seventeen hundred forty eight; during which time he will be obliged to serve him in this occupation either here in New Orleans,

<p>[dix-sept-cent] quarante huit pendant Lequel tem[p]s il sera tenu de Le servir En Lad[ite] qualité soit icy a la N^{[ouve]lle} orleans au^{d[it]} Poste de la pointe Coupé[e] ou ailleurs si Le Service du Roy le demande et ce sans aucune interruption de la part du^{d[it]} Marly, sobligeant monsr. sieur [monsieur] J[ean Joseph] de Pontalba de le Nourrir et Medicamenter pendant Lesd[ites] trois années aubout duquel tem[p]s Monsr. Sr. [monsieur] de Pontalba promet Et s[']oblige de donner La Liberté a Venus <i>Negresse</i> son Esclave Laquelle est femme dud[it] Marly Mariés Ensemble En face d' [de l'] Eglise [;] que sil arrivoit que monsr. Sr de Pontalba Vint a mourir pendant l'Intervalle desd[its] trois années Il assure par Ces presentes La Liberte a Lad[ite] venus ladite <i>negresse</i> Laquelle se pourra servir des presentes pour En Requerir La Confirmation par Mess^[ieurs] Les Gouverneur Et ordonnateur delad[ite] province</p> <p>[feuille 1 verso] [digital 3] (26918.)</p> <p>et Ce pour presenter a toutes Creances Et heritages si existe En Consideration des bons</p>	<p>at the said post of Pointe Coupée, or elsewhere if the king's service requires it, and without any interruption on the part of the aforesaid Marly, Monsieur Jean Joseph Delfau de Pontalba will be obligated to feed and medicate him during the said three years, at the end of which time Monsieur de Pontalba promises and obligates himself to give freedom to his <i>négresse esclave</i> Venus, who is the wife of the said Marly, married to each other before the churchⁱⁱ; [and] if Monsieur de Pontalba were to die during the course of the said three years, he guarantees through those present freedom to the said Venus, <i>négresse</i>, who may use those present [the witnesses] to request confirmation from the Governor and <i>Ordonnateur</i> of the said province</p> <p>[p. # 2] [dig. 3] (26918.)</p> <p>and this [document] to be presented to all claims and inheritances should [they] exist, in consideration of the good services that the said Venus rendered to him and that she will render him in the future;</p>
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services que Luy a Rendu lad[ite] venus
 Et quelle pensserait Luy Rendre dans lavenir [;]
 Le mary et La femme, Lors estant Libre
 depart Et dautre aubout desd[ites] trois années
 de se Retirer ou bon Leur Semblera sinon
 Q[ui]ls nayment s'arranger pour servir
 Ensuite monsr. [monsieur] de pontalba suivant
 Les Conventions quils pourront faire
 Ensemble [;] Comme aussy a Eté Convenu
 entre Les parties que si led[it] marly venoit
 amourir pendant Lesd[ites] trois annees
 il Consent permettre La Liberté
 de Lad[ite] Esclave ++ [bien Entendu
 que Lad[ite] Esclave servira Les trois années
 monsr. Sr. De pontalba] ainsy quil a ete
 Convenu Comme aussy que si pendant
 Led[it] tem[p]s Led[it] Marly venoit a se
 deranger de son devoir par sa faute Monsr.
 [monsieur] de Pontalba Le Renverrait de Chez
 Luy sans quil puisse Rien pretendre
 Non plus que sa femme [;] Car ainsy
 promet oblige et Chacun
 En droit luy Renonce [;] fait Et
 Passé a la n^{[ouve]lle} orleans En [l']Etude
 Lan Mil Sept Cent quarante

 [feuille 2 recto] [digital 4]
 (26919.)

 Cinq Le Neuf Novembre [en] presence
 de Sieur Augustin Chantalou et
 Marin Le Normant temoins y
 demeurant Et ont signé ++ [bien Entendu

the husband and the wife, then each of them being
 free, at the end of the said three years,
 to withdraw wherever it seems good to them
 unless
 they want to arrange to serve
monsieur de Pontalba thereafter, according to
 the conventions that they might make
 together; as it also has been agreed
 between the parties that if the said Marly came
 to die during the said three years,
 he consents to grant the freedom
 of the said slave ++ [it being understood that the
 said slave will serve *Monsieur* Pontalba the three
 years] as well as it has also been
 agreed that if during
 the said time the said Marly came to
 neglect his duty through his fault *Monsieur*
 Pontalba would dismiss him from his home,
 without him or his wife being able to claim
 anything; thus [he]
 promises, obliges, and each
 person waives their right; made and
 passed at the notary's office in New Orleans,
 the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-

 [p. # 2] [dig. 4]
 (26919.)

 five, the ninth November, in the presence
 of *Sieur* Augustin Chantalou and
 Marin Le Normant, witnesses
 residing there, and have signed
 ++ [it being understood that the said slave will

que Lad[ite] Esclave servira Les trois années monsr. Sr. De pontalba]	serve <i>Monsieur</i> Pontalba the three years]
[Signé:] Chantalou	[Signed:] [Augustin] Chantalou
[Signé:] pontalba	[Signed:] [Jean Joseph Delfaut] Pontalba
[Signé:] jean baptiste Marly	[Signed:] Jean Baptiste Marly ⁱⁱⁱ
[Signé:] normand	[Signed:] [Marin Le] Normant
[Signé:] henry [Rubrica] N[otaire]	[Signed:] [Nicolas] Henry [Rubric], Notary

Please note that what appear to be typos (missing spaces, abbreviations, misspellings, strikeouts, superscript) appear in the original manuscript, but are corrected in the more modernized translation. For more on our editorial practices see <https://docs.k4bl.org/bestpractices>.

- i. After drafting this initial record, notary Nicolas Henry added to two separate places in the document. These additions are represented by the symbols “+” and “++” used in the transcription. To aid readers, we have included the additive text in brackets where the symbols surface.
- ii. The Code Noir mandated certain regulations regarding the marriages between enslaved people, such as baptism as a requirement for marriage and the approval of enslavers prior to marrying. For more on this history, see “En Face D’Eglise”: Legally Sanctioned Marriages” in Sophie White, *Voices of the Enslaved: Love, Labor, and Longing in French Louisiana* (Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 2021), 192-196.
- iii. Jean Baptiste Marly signed his name on this document and on several other documents from French colonial Louisiana. Whereas many Africans and people of African descent “left their mark” on records by drawing the cross, Jean Baptiste Marly’s signature hints at both his potential literacy and his elevated status within New Orleans. A pillar in the community, Jean Baptiste Marly served as godfather for several enslaved children baptized during the 1730s and 1740s. For example, on June 7, 1733 Jean Baptiste Marly attended the baptism of Marie, a thirteen day old baby that Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville claimed as his property, to serve as her godfather. See the Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, St. Louis Cathedral Baptisms, 1731-1733, 06/07/1733. For a brief analysis of Jean Baptiste Marly’s socialization with white people living in New Orleans, see Cecile Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans: Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 168-169.