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## Black Policemen in Jim Crow New Orleans

Vanessa Flores-Robert  
*University of New Orleans*, [vflores1@uno.edu](mailto:vflores1@uno.edu)

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Black Policemen in Jim Crow New Orleans

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
History

by

Vanessa Flores-Robert

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2006

December 2011

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## Dedication

To my husband and son: my life's compass

## Acknowledgment

I would like to thank God for making the fulfillment of a dream possible. To my family and friends for their patience and support, I could have never completed this task without their love. Many thanks to the professors and students in the Department of History at the University of New Orleans for their input and stellar expertise. To my committee members Dr. Connie Atkinson, Dr. Robert DuPont, and Dr. Nikki Brown, thank you for the time you dedicated to my work. A very heartfelt thanks to Dr. Atkinson for her dedication to my work and for believing that my research is important. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Everett G. Robert, Jr., whose love, sacrifice, and patience served as the foundation for this project. I will forever be grateful.

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## Abstract

Although historians have done in-depth researched on Black police in the South, before the Civil War and during Reconstruction, they seldom assess black policemen's role in New Orleans between the Battle of Liberty Place and 1913. The men discussed here argue that despite the hardening racial attitudes in Post- Reconstruction South, in New Orleans opportunity still existed for Blacks to serve in positions of authority, perhaps a heritage of the city's earlier tri-partite racial order. The information obtained from primary sources such as police manuals, beat books, and newspapers, counters the widely held belief that African American presence in the police during this period was completely defined by Jim Crow. This work presents updated and corrected evidence that Blacks were enrolled in the New Orleans Police Department during the time of Jim Crow, challenging the notion that after 1909 Blacks in New Orleans were not part of the police department.

**Key Words:** New Orleans Police Department, Post Reconstruction, policemen, Jim Crow, Black Codes, African Americans, Metropolitan Police, Stephen Boyard, Louis J. Therence, Joseph Tholmer, William H. Robinson, George St. Avide, Henry LeBeaud, Edward Stykes, George Doyle, Benjamin J. Blair, Arthur Boisdore

*“In 1909, the last two African-American police officers in New Orleans, Louis J. Terrence [sic] and Joseph Tholmer, died in service. Their deaths closed an era for black police in the South”*  
Marvin W. Dulaney, *Black Police in America*

*“Police Board: Corporal Boyard Retired”*

*Daily Picayune, New Orleans, LA, May 15, 1913*

## **1: Introduction**

The American Civil War may have prompted the death of slavery in the United States, but for most black Americans, this so-called freedom was quickly replaced with an apartheid project, Jim Crow, named for a minstrel song, “Jump Jim Crow,” which first surfaced in 1832.<sup>1</sup> As a continuation of Black Codes, Jim Crow has been defined as the “legal, customary, and often extralegal system that segregated and isolated African Americans from mainstream American life.”<sup>2</sup> On October 15, 1883, the United States Supreme Court decision to declare the Civil Rights legislation of 1875 unconstitutional prompted a proliferation of Jim Crow laws. In 1896, the Supreme Court further cemented these laws by upholding the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of the constitutionality of “separate but equal.”<sup>3</sup> It was not until well into the 1960s, with the Civil Rights Movement, that African Americans began to succeed in tearing down the walls of segregation.

Current research in race relations within the police department of New Orleans reveals that Jim Crow permeated this organization as well other Southern institutions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. However, as in many themes associated with New Orleans, Jim Crow was an incomplete and complex institution with exceptions and

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<sup>1</sup> Vann C. Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2002), 7

<sup>2</sup> Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis, *Jim Crow America: a Documentary History* (University of Arkansas Press, 2009), xi

<sup>3</sup> For more information on this historic U.S. Supreme Court decision see: Keith Weldon Medley, *We as Freemen: Plessy v. Ferguson* (Pelican Publishing Company, 2003)



interruptions. Although urban and Louisiana historians have mentioned a few Blacks in the New Orleans Police Department, limited information has been offered about these men. In fact, confirmed research of this organization reveals that the force enlisted more men of African decent than previously referenced and at least one officer remained on the force much longer than previously stated. African Americans Corporal Stephen Boyard, Patrolmen Louis Joseph Therence and Joseph Tholmer served from 1878 to 1913 in the New Orleans Police Department. Other black police officers identified as working in this period include: William H. Robinson, George St. Avide, Henry LeBeaud, Edward Stykes, George Doyle, Benjamin J. Blair, and Arthur Boisdore. In an era defined by racial discrimination, limited social advancement for Blacks, and segregation both in the public and private sector, these officers held highly respected positions within an important organization in the community. This work will present a historical account of the participation of Blacks as police officers from Colonial Louisiana until 1913, with updated and corrected factual evidence that Blacks were enrolled in the New Orleans Police Department during the time of Jim Crow, challenging the notion that after 1909 Blacks in New Orleans were not part of the police department. Furthermore, this new evidence will call for a deeper look at the opportunities for African Americans during this period of deep racial discord.

Throughout the history of policing New Orleans, blacks were at times employed and at other times barred from the force. From its inception, the police force of New Orleans has reflected the city's cosmopolitan personality. Both the French and the Spanish colonial authorities recognized the usefulness of Free People of Color as well as slaves as policing agents. However, when the Americans arrived in New Orleans after the Louisiana Purchase,

their inability to acknowledge or to accept the social order implemented by their predecessors led to the back and forth policies of segregation and desegregation, possibly laying the foundation for racial discord, which led to Black Codes and Jim Crow laws.

## **II. Blacks in Militias in Colonial Times**

As early as 1730, the French used Blacks to serve as militia in Louisiana. French officials employed armed Free People of Color and slaves to fight against uprisings, and the Spanish further solidified this trend. In 1763, following the Seven Years War and France's abandonment of its American colonies, the Spanish took over the Louisiana colony from France and continued the use of the free black militia. Due to the Spanish colonial government's ongoing fear of uprisings, slave revolts and "Republicanism," it used even larger numbers of free Blacks.<sup>4</sup> During Spanish rule, Blacks served a variety of roles. They patrolled the streets, served as health officers as well as traffic controllers. One of their most important tasks was to apprehend run-away slaves.<sup>5</sup> The Spanish relied on blacks, both slaves and free, to help "suppress slave insurrection[s]," and the "reliable manpower... [of] the Free People of Color," helped "secure the colony."<sup>6</sup>

Eventually, the collaboration between the Spanish and the Free People of Color soured. In 1795, Guillermo DuParc, a district military commandant at Point Coupée, Louisiana, revealed plans of a considerable slave revolt. This discovery, which implicated

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<sup>4</sup> Jerah Johnson "Colonial New Orleans," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, by Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 54, 55

<sup>5</sup> Dennis C. Rousey, *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 13

<sup>6</sup> James G Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guard: The Black Military Experience during the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 3. Further reading on Black Militias see Noah Andre Tradueau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865* (Little, Brown and Company, 1988), Johnson "Colonial New Orleans" 54

members of Indian tribes and Free People of Color, along with the speculation of a French fleet waiting in the Gulf of Mexico, caused great fear among the planters. Baron de Carondelet, the Spanish Governor of the colonies of Louisiana, joined forces with the planters in order to suppress the colonists' fears. Carondelet, thinking it necessary to teach the enslaved conspirators a lesson, ordered the hanging of twenty-three slaves, deported thirty-five, and reinstated harsh slave control and discipline. These severe measures did not last long, however.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the 1790s, the Spanish government lifted the repressions and restored civil liberties to Free People of Color, in addition to reinstating the legal protection slaves once possessed.<sup>8</sup> Although their relationship was never the same, many members of the free black community continued to supply information to the Spanish, believing this strategy would be as advantageous for themselves and as for their "brothers and sisters still in bondage."

Historian Arnold Hirsch writes that the evolution of the city's race relations "speaks to the timeless issues of ethnogenesis, the process of assimilation, and the development of social leadership." New Orleans's early population laid the foundation for this evolution by implementing "three-tiered, multi-racial social structures in which a class of marginal status and frequently mixed origin was inserted between blacks and whites."<sup>9</sup> This racial order of whites, Free People of Color and slaves followed the path of other New World slave societies, as a *tripartite* society. By 1804, Black New Orleanians "enjoyed more

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 55

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 55

<sup>9</sup> Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization.*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, (1992), 189.

freedom than in most other cities in the slave states,"<sup>10</sup> But, once New Orleans became part of the United States, Hirsch argues, that a rigid two-tiered structure that "drew a single unyielding line between the white and the nonwhite" threatened this system."<sup>11</sup>

However, despite their rejection of this system, the Americans, like the French and Spanish before them, also adopted the practice of utilizing Free People of Color as soldiers. In 1803, just after the Louisiana Purchase, the city council appointed 25 white men to serve as police officers. However, due to numerous complaints about these men, the city council fired them. As a result, in 1804, Mayor Etienne Boré decided that in lieu of white men serving in the mounted patrol, he authorized the hiring of free "mulattoes," under the command of white officers, to serve as police officers in the municipal force known as the Gendarmerie.<sup>12</sup> Urban historian Dennis Rousey writes that as early as 1804, "the new urban center of the American Southwest displayed a willingness to consider the employment of black policemen."

By 1805, New Orleans was the most populated urban city in the lower Mississippi Valley. The city consisted of 8,500 people of whom 42 percent were white, 37 percent were slaves, and 19 percent were Free People of Color.<sup>13</sup> The city implemented a municipal police force similar to a militia. Although comparable to other patrol organizations in the South, New Orleans' type of armed force differed from the "civil style" of policing of Northern cities, "where constables and night watchmen, un-uniformed and unarmed,

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<sup>10</sup> Dennis C Rousey. "Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction" In *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity Volume 2*, edited by Ernestine Jenkins and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 88

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*,. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press,(1992), 189

<sup>12</sup> Rousey, "Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 87

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

presented a thoroughly unmilitary and scarcely intimidating appearance.”<sup>14</sup> Rousey argues that this difference was due to the perception that New Orleans, as well as other southern cities such as Savannah, Charleston, and Mobile, needed a militia to control their large slave population. In fact, Louisiana Territorial Governor William C. C. Claiborne considered disbanding the militia of Free People of Color, but their performance in the 1811 slave insurrections in the parishes of St. Charles and St. John the Baptist made the governor reconsider. By 1815, Free People of Color and slaves fought with Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans.<sup>15</sup>

Although the use of Blacks as authority figures was advantageous for the territorial government, some in the Anglo community expressed growing anxiety with the situation. Many feared riots and a social breakdown. These critics were not only opposed to the use of martial-style police, especially since many of the officers were considered foreign mercenaries who spoke a variety of languages and were incapable of understanding the city’s social order, but also opposed the use of Blacks as a policing authority.<sup>16</sup> By 1814, the ethnic composition of the force was mostly “foreign French...a term referring to men of French descent born elsewhere than Louisiana.” In addition, many felt that “armed black men were a threat to the colony.” However, as Marvin W. Dulaney argues in his book *Black Police in America*,

These men were loyal citizens and sought only to enjoy the rights and privileges of American citizenship...If the duties of citizenship required patrolling, policing, and suppressing black slaves, [Free People of Color were willing to do it in order to] improve their own precarious position in society where skin color usually determined the status and condition of servitude.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rousey, *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889*, 13

<sup>15</sup> Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guard: The Black Military Experience during the Civil War*, 3

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 25

<sup>17</sup> Marvin W. Dulaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.), 9

In 1814, out of a 10-man sample, the city guard, a permanent municipal force formed in 1809, had at least two city guards (Charles Allegre and Constant Michel) who were Free People of Color.<sup>18</sup>

After 1830, the hands of progress turned back for Free People of Color in New Orleans, particularly in the police force. The city ordinance whites-only employment for city jobs continued the attempt by some white New Orleanians to strip Free People of Color of their rights and status.<sup>19</sup> Dulaney further claims that this attack was in part the response to the increase in the Anglo-American population. He adds, "Immigrants, especially Irish immigrants, took over those [policing] positions."<sup>20</sup> According to Paul F. LaChance, in the 1830s "the white population [of New Orleans] shifted dramatically when it tripled from 20,110 to 61,131, with Irish and German immigrants accounting for the larger part of the increase." Meanwhile the population of "free persons of color ... grew from 11,607 in 1830 to 19,376 in 1849."<sup>21</sup> With the implementation of segregation laws, continued pressure to separate New Orleans by color in public life, and the significant increase in numbers of Anglo-Americans, racial hostility permeated towards "all persons of color."<sup>22</sup>

Yet, by 1830 there was ethnic conflict among white groups as well. In 1836, after much Anglo-American lobbying in the State Legislature, the city was divided into three independent municipalities each with an independent police force, thus metamorphosing

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<sup>18</sup> Rousey "Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 87

<sup>19</sup> Historian H.E. Sterkx states that in 1822 the New Orleans city council passed a resolution, which indicated that in the future only white laborers could be employed by the municipal labor-managers. It can be assumed that this resolution included the city police; hence, there is no evidence of Blacks in the force during this period.

<sup>20</sup> Dulaney claims that this policy was put in place by the New Orleans Council, however Rousey argues that the "hardening of white southern attitudes on race and slavery was never embodied in law or ordinance." Dulaney, *Black Police in America*, 10; Rousey, "Black Policemen in New Orleans during Reconstruction," 88

<sup>21</sup> Paul F. Lachance, "The Foreign French," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, edited by Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 118.

<sup>22</sup> Dulaney, *Black Police in America*, 10

the police force back from a military-style force to a municipal one. These separate, all-white forces, sacrificed “efficiency...for the sake of ethnic separatism.” The Irish came to dominate the police department. According to Rousey, “the increasing volume of immigration and the growing diversity of the city’s population helped intensify ethnic conflict and led to greater violence in the 1850s.”<sup>23</sup> This period of the force marked its most significant change: its new ethnic composition.

As a result of these ethnic changes, just before the Civil War, the all-white New Orleans police force lacked organization, monetary funds, and corruption overpowered the organization. The poorly funded police force could not even afford uniforms; their only form of identification was a leather cap painted with “a unique roll number,” and since the three municipal forces refused to work together, internal progress proved difficult. Decisions about when and how to patrol the streets to managing elections was nearly impossible. Although the three separate forces agreed on the force’s demilitarization and substituted their weapons for spontoons, the municipal forces often clashed, and in some instances police officers arrested officers from other municipalities.<sup>24</sup>

### **III. New Orleans Metropolitan Police Force (1868-1877)**

New Orleans and the police department felt the Civil War’s consequences almost immediately. In 1862, after the fall of New Orleans, Union General B.F. Butler captured the confederate city. Butler suspended civil government and implemented martial law. This

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<sup>23</sup> Rousey concludes that the corruption within the police department was in large part due to the influx of Irish immigrants on the force. He further explains that the Irish violent culture was a direct result of the growing corruption in the police force. Rousey, *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889*, chapter three “A Perfect Hell on Earth” p 41, 66-101

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.35, 41,50

new regime called for a military police force and a provost marshal. On May 20, 1862, Union Colonel George F. Shepley replaced Mayor John T. Monroe as military commandant. Two months later General William Butler appointed Shepley military governor of Louisiana.<sup>25</sup>

On April 7, 1865, the surrender of the Confederate army marked the end of the Civil War, and although the nation remained united, its people did not. Following the race riots of 1866 in several cities, including New Orleans, the Black community, through the city's first African-American newspaper, the *New Orleans Tribune*, demanded an integrated police department.<sup>26</sup> In May 1867, Military Governor General Philip Sheridan ordered Mayor Edward Heath to "adjust the present police force so that at least one half of said force shall be composed of ex-Union soldiers."<sup>27</sup> Earlier that year, reinstated Mayor Monroe, under Sheridan's orders, drafted an ordinance to reorganize the New Orleans police force, which included the specification of the number of police to be appointed, their pay, duties and uniform. Instead, Monroe put in place an all-white force, including some men who had terrorized Blacks in the 1866 riots.<sup>28</sup> His action caused immediate repercussions. With a new mayor in office, the *Tribune's* editors continued to push the issue. Dr. Louis Charles Roundanez, editor of the *Tribune*, wrote a letter published on May 11, 1867, requesting the Mayor to "show his sense of justice toward the colored people" by appointing colored police officers.<sup>29</sup> The Black community's continued pressure on the Mayor to integrate the police department resulted in several appointments. By May 28, 1867, Louisiana Governor

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<sup>25</sup> Since city police was taken over by the military during the Civil War, Blacks actively participated in militias. See Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guard: The Black Military Experience during the Civil War*.

<sup>26</sup> The *New Orleans Tribune* was the first national daily African-American newspaper in the United States. Dr. Louis Charles Roundanez, a black Creole, published the *Tribune* from 1864 until sometime in 1870.

<sup>27</sup> Sheridan issued Special Order No.33 on May 2, 1867. *Tribune*, May 11, 1867

<sup>28</sup> *Tribune*, May 11, 1867

<sup>29</sup> *Tribune*, May 12, 1867



James Madison Wells appointed Charles Courcelle, an ex-slave, as the first Black on the Board of Police Commissioners. By the following month, there were more than a dozen Black police officers, including Octave Rey, the first African American in the United States to become police captain in the nation. Although some whites viewed this as the Africanization of the police, driving a deeper racial wedge between some the races, during Reconstruction, “New Orleans became a center – perhaps the center – of black progress.”<sup>30</sup> In fact, historians cite New Orleans as the first Southern city to integrate the police during Reconstruction, as well as employing the largest numbers of blacks to the force.<sup>31</sup>

The passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which imposed military rule on the conquered South, further cemented the presence of Blacks on the force. In 1869, the Louisiana State Legislature placed the city-run police force under the command of the state.<sup>32</sup> Governor Henry C. Warmoth merged the three parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard into one police district and assigned the newly formed Metropolitan Police Force to patrol these areas. Color was no barrier in the new force’s requirements. Rule 1 in the 1871 manual lists the eight qualifications, including being a citizen of the United States, able to read and write English, and never have been convicted of a crime.<sup>33</sup> Blacks held important jobs in administrative areas, as well as command posts. According to the Manual of the Metropolitan Police Force its president of the Board of Commissioners was, Oscar J.

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<sup>30</sup> Dennis Rousey, “Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction,” in *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. History and Masculinity; The 19<sup>th</sup> Century: From Emancipation to Jim Crow vol. 2*, ed. Earnestine Jenkins and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 84

<sup>31</sup> Marvin Dulaney, *Black Police in America*, 12

<sup>32</sup> *New Orleans Police Department (PANO) Commemorative Album*, 1985.

<sup>33</sup> *Manual of the Metropolitan Police Force*, 1871. 10-11

Dunn, an African American.<sup>34</sup>

Just like their white colleagues, black police officers shared the authority to wear police uniforms, carry firearms, and arrest anyone committing or suspected of committing a crime, regardless of race.<sup>35</sup> Although Historian Howard Rabinowitz states that during this period in the South, “the number of Negro policemen was never very great,” in October of 1868 in New Orleans the Metropolitan Police force’s ranks “were sixty-five percent black” for a total of 170 black officers. By 1870, out of a force of 647 about 182 black officers were policing the Crescent City’s streets.<sup>36</sup> Later, this Republican integrated force would be the “only effective opposition to the White League,” a white-only paramilitary group, that terrorized Freedmen and tried to keep Republicans out of office.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, many whites throughout Louisiana refused to accept the civil rights granted to blacks, free and ex-slaves. They rebuked the passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Several riots broke out throughout the state, in which many blacks were murdered. One of the earliest riots in New Orleans involving the Metropolitan Police was on March 5, 1873, in the so-called Battle of the Cabildo. Democratic militia forces challenged newly elected Governor William Pitt Kellogg’s administration. The militia targeted the integrated, Republican Party supported, Metropolitan Police of New Orleans. The mob headed for police headquarters located in the

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<sup>34</sup> Oscar J. Dunn was a former Captain in the Union Army, and he served as first African American Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana in 1868-1871.

<sup>35</sup> Rousey, “Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction,” p. 93

<sup>36</sup> Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race, Ethnicity, and Urbanization: Selected Essays*. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 171. Rousey bases his research on the population schedules of the 1870 census. Rousey, “Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction,” 87, 89

<sup>37</sup> Joe Gray Taylor, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Louisiana*,” in *Louisiana: A History*, edited by Bennet H. Hall (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Forum Press, 1984), 203

Cabildo. The Metropolitans successfully put down the militia's coup attempt to oust Kellogg.

However, by April 13, 1873, the Democratic Party militia had formalized into The White League. This terrorist group again attempted to oust Governor Kellogg from office and eliminate the Metropolitan Police force. On September 14, 1874, tensions had escalated and the White League leaders called on the city's all-white citizenry to join in arms. The violent meeting place was the statue of Henry Clay in the middle of Canal Street, the main street of New Orleans, midway between St. Charles Avenue and Royal streets. By noon that evening, hundreds of White League members had appeared armed with weapons, forcing Governor Kellogg to relinquish the governorship.<sup>38</sup> Kellogg summoned 600 members of the Metropolitan Police, as well as 3,000 black militia. The Battle of Liberty Place, as it became known, soon ensued. The 8,400 White Leaguers were no match to the panic stricken Metropolitans. Within a day, the White League successfully took over several buildings including the St. Louis Hotel, which served as the Republican State House. On Tuesday, the newspapers reported on the dead and wounded.<sup>39</sup> According to *The Daily Picayune* only one "mulatto (the only negro hurt) [was] mortally wounded."<sup>40</sup> This claim outraged the editors of the *Weekly Louisianian*, who cautioned their "anti-Republican journals...on publishing daily sensational articles with flaming headlines about negroes." They claimed

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<sup>38</sup> Tom Smith, *The Crescent City Lynchings: The Murder of Chief Hennessey, The New Orleans "Mafia" Trials, and the Parish Prison Mob*. (The Lyons Press, 2007), 44.

<sup>39</sup> The number of fatalities varies, according to the *New Orleans Times*, September 15, 1874 edition the numbers were 20 policemen killed and many wounded, and only seven White Leaguers killed. While *The Daily Picayune* reported 30 metropolitan policemen killed and over 30 wounded and 12 White Leaguers killed and 13 wounded. According to Historian Kimberly S. Hanger, in her book *A Medley of Cultures: Louisiana History at the Cabildo*, the numbers are 11 metropolitans killed and 60 wounded and sixteen killed and 45 wounded of the White League.

<sup>40</sup> *The Daily Picayune* "War: The Uprisings of the Citizens, Battle at the Head of Canal Street, Badger Mortally Wounded. Eleven Metropolitans Killed and Many Wounded, The Metropolitans Artillery Captured, and their Force Dispersed, An Account of the Proceedings Elsewhere, Skirmishing About the Streets, Resignations and Surrenders Among the Police Force, the City in Possession of the Citizens," September 15, 1874

that many more black Metropolitans and black civilians were killed or wounded during the encounter with the White Leaguers.<sup>41</sup> The White League victory was short lived. Three days after the coup, United States troops successfully came to the aid of the Metropolitan Police and reinstated Governor Kellogg.

In the 1870's, "New Orleans, with nearly half of all black policemen in the South, operated in a more equalitarian fashion." The era of Reconstruction offered the newly enfranchised Blacks political, educational and social opportunities never before enjoyed. In this period of racial scrutiny, in the police force there was no distinction between black and white officers, "all ordinary cops on the beat...wore uniforms, carried guns, and otherwise fully embodied the authority of police officers."<sup>42</sup> Historians could consider the New Orleans Metropolitan Police a "pioneer of integration" in a city full of segregation.<sup>43</sup>

#### **IV. New Orleans Police Department in the Progressive Era (1889-1913)**

Although historians have done in-depth research on black police before the Civil War and during Reconstruction, they seldom assess the period between the Battle of Liberty Place and 1913. Drawing from primary sources such as police manuals, police beat books, and newspapers, a clearer picture can be constructed of the existence of blacks serving as police officers during this period ruled by deep racial sentiment. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, and the return to Home Rule, the Louisiana State Legislature quickly disassembled the Metropolitan Police Force, thus returning the force to the mayor's jurisdiction. With the withdrawal of federal policing, the citizens of New Orleans demanded

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<sup>41</sup> *The Weekly Louisianian* "Caution" and "The Colored Metropolitans," September 26, 1874. This weekly newspaper promised to issue an accurate account of the battle, but the October 3, 1874 issue could not be located.

<sup>42</sup> Rousey, "Black Policemen in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 93

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 93

a new city charter to patrol the streets. However, it took another ten years and the intervention of the State Supreme Court for a legislative bill, known as Act 63, and introduced by Honorable Felix J. Dreyfous, to reorganize a police force for New Orleans.

In 1889, the elected city commissioners finally recognized Mayor Shakespeare's police force. The mayor appointed David C. Hennessey as Superintendent of Police. The new superintendent restructured the entire force. He submitted his recruits to "strict examinations by a Civil Service Board of Examiners and had to possess moral, educational and physical qualifications."<sup>44</sup> As in the past, recruits were required to read and write English, as well as have knowledge of the civil law, city ordinances, and departmental regulations. Patrolmen's equipment included a badge and a firearm. The badge was required to be pinned over the "left breast of the top garment." On-duty officers were required to carry revolvers on their person at all times. Each officer had the obligation to keep his uniform neat and clean while on duty, and to maintain in his revolver in "first class order."<sup>45</sup>

During an arrest, the arresting police officer(s) was obliged to take all parties involved into custody. According to 1890 *City Police Manual*, officers were to remain cool and determined but firm, as well as to use their clubs or draw their weapons except in "extreme cases." Furthermore, officers were required to present all the facts in court for each corresponding arrest. In the 1890 *Manual of the City Police*, misdemeanors commonly committed in New Orleans included:

"Street intoxication... driving or leading any horse, cart or wheel carriage on the foot path or sidewalk... bathing in waters bounding the city, during the daytime, without

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<sup>44</sup> *Manual of the City Police* adopted by the Board of Commissioners, January 1, 1890, p.15

<sup>45</sup> *Manual of the Police Department of the City of New Orleans*, 1908

being clothed so as to prevent indecent exposure of the person... and animals running at large.”<sup>46</sup>

Most notably, while rights for Blacks Louisianans were decreasing, the new New Orleans police force had a “no [discrimination] of any kind policy.”<sup>47</sup> Even as the state of Louisiana was steadily making it more difficult for Blacks to vote, the police force continued to use blacks as authority figures in both black and white communities. Blacks were actively serving in the police force, starting out as Supernumeraries and subsequently promoted to Patrolmen and even Corporals. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* argument that “the ‘great city of New Orleans gives nothing, absolutely nothing [to the black community] except a few Negro policemen,’ may have led to the erroneous conclusion that blacks no longer participated in law enforcement.”<sup>48</sup> However, an investigation of the records shows a different story. New Orleans police department continued to hire blacks to the police force and some blacks anchored themselves in the New Orleans Police Department. Between 1889 and 1913, at least ten black officers patrolled the streets of New Orleans, and on March 28, 1889, the police force promoted one of these men to corporal.

Even in the aftermath of the Robert Charles incident in 1900, when the racial tension between blacks and whites in New Orleans reached its peak, the police department did not adhere to Jim Crow. In a bloody rampage, Robert Charles, an African American native of Mississippi, killed seven people, four of whom were police officers, and seriously wounded eight others. All of his victims were white. The riots by white vigilantes that

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<sup>46</sup> *Manual of the City Police* adopted by the Board of Commissioners, January 1, 1890, p.99

<sup>47</sup> New Orleans Police Department, *New Orleans Police Department Commemorative Album* 1985, p. 24

<sup>48</sup> Edited by Dr. R.E. Jones, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* was a religious paper. This daily circulated among the African American community from 1877 to 1929. September 21, 1899.

ensued claimed the lives of at least a dozen people, mostly blacks. Historian Eric Arnesen argues that, “there was nothing new about racial or ethnic violence in New Orleans, [since] whites had targeted blacks regularly during Reconstruction and the depression years in the 1870s and 1890s ... White reaction to Charles vividly illustrated the hardening of racial attitudes which occurred around that time.”<sup>49</sup> Still, police officials did not oust Blacks from the police force, and they continued to serve well into 1913.

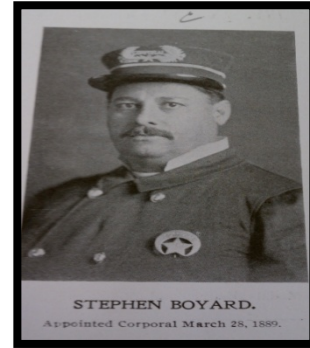
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<sup>49</sup> Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers*, p.148; William Ivy Hair, *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900* (Louisiana University Press, 1976), xiv

## V. Black Police Officers in New Orleans 1889-1913

### Stephen Boyard

Contrary to current literature, Corporal Stephen Boyard, not Joseph Tholmer or Louis J. Therence, was the last black police officer to serve on the New Orleans police force until Mayor Delesseps “Chep” Morrison again desegregated the police force in 1950.<sup>50</sup> On December 21, 1854, Boyard was born in New Orleans to, Armantine Schneider and Etienne Boyard.<sup>51</sup> It is unknown whether they were Free People of Color or enslaved. However, the 1880 Federal Census indicates Boyard’s mother’s race as mulatto, her marital status as widow, and her occupation “keeping house.”<sup>52</sup> Considering she was mulatto makes it plausible she was a Free Person of Color. Although the 1854 baptismal record does not indicate Boyard’s race, the Census of 1880 lists him as mulatto and the census of 1900 lists him and his wife, Alvina, as black.<sup>53</sup> As can be noted in Boyard’s picture above, as in all the other officer’s pictures, someone penciled in a letter “c.” This letter suggests a designation of “Colored,”



Stephen Boyard  
New Orleans Police Department  
Commemorative Album, 1900

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<sup>50</sup> The book *Black Police in America*, by Marvin W. Dulaney states, “In 1909, the last two African-American police officers in New Orleans, Louis J. Terrence [sic] and Joseph Tholmer, died in service. Their deaths closed an era for black police in the South.” p.17 Boyard’s retirement in 1913 demonstrates that he was still active in the force until that time. Further research is needed to conclude if he was in fact the last black officer of the era or if another person outlasted Boyard.

<sup>51</sup> St. Augustine Baptisms for White People May 29,1851-May 4,1856 Register No. 2 vol. 2-B p.114 act 1 The baptismal record at the Archdiocese of New Orleans lists Boyard’s first name as *Etienne* with *Thomas* as a middle name. The registry also states Boyard was a legitimate child of the couple. Furthermore, the 1900 United States Federal Census confirms Boyard’s date of birth of December 1854.

<sup>52</sup> 1880 United States Federal Census record. In the same census, Stephen’s age is listed as 26 and his occupation is “city police.” His brother, Auga Boyard, age 24, also listed his occupation “city police.” However, his name has not been located in New Orleans police records.

<sup>53</sup> Assistant Archivist Dorenda DuPont, at the Archdioceses of New Orleans, indicated that at times “colored” children’s baptisms were recorded in the “whites only” baptism record book. She could not explain the reasons for such practices.



and is the only indication of race.<sup>54</sup> At the time of the 1900 US census, Boyard was 45 years old and his occupation was listed as “City Police Corporal.” The Boyards had five children and they had been married for 25 years. The city directories of 1890 list his address as 79 Street [sic] Anthony, New Orleans, Louisiana.<sup>55</sup>

Boyard’s exact date of employment with the police is undetermined; however, a *Daily Picayune* article dated May 9, 1888, states the earliest independent account of his employment thus, affirming his appointment to patrolman.<sup>56</sup> According to the 1900 *New Orleans Police Commemorative Album*, the force promoted Boyard to corporal in 1889.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, his earliest account in the Commissioner’s annual report lists him as a Corporal, the rank he held until his retirement in 1913.<sup>58</sup> Newspaper articles state that Boyard worked in the First, Tenth and Eleventh precincts.<sup>59</sup>

The 1908 *Manual of the Police Department of the City of New Orleans* describes the duties of a corporal. In accordance with the manual, Corporal Boyard would have been in charge of a squad, called roll, inspected uniforms, and made sure the patrolmen’s appearance was clean. After roll call, Boyard would march his squad to their respective sections, where the corporal would maintain a vigilant watch in order to ascertain the men

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<sup>54</sup> With the exception of Joseph Tholmer, all the men mentioned in this project have the “c” indicator on their picture in the *New Orleans Police Department Commemorative Album, 1900*; however there could be others who have yet to be identified.

<sup>55</sup> New Orleans City Directories, 1890. New Orleans, LA

<sup>56</sup> *The Daily Picayune*, “City Council A Good Week’s Work Condensed Into a One-Night Session” May 9, 1888

<sup>57</sup> *New Orleans Police Department Commemorative Album, 1900*, p.121, New Orleans Public Library City Archive/Special Collections

<sup>58</sup> *Annual Report of Board of Commissioners of the City of New Orleans and the Inspector of Police Force of the City of New Orleans for the Year 1908 – 1913*, New Orleans Public Library City Archive/Special Collections.

<sup>59</sup> *The Daily Picayune* article titled “Police Transfers,” December 1, 1895, New Orleans, Louisiana, states “Corporal Boyard was transferred from the eleventh to the first precinct.” Later an article in the same paper notes under “Police Personals,” July 2, 1897, New Orleans, Louisiana, “Corporal Boyard has recovered from a fractured knee and can return to work in the first precinct.” On March 3, 1910, in the same newspaper, under the title, “Mrs. Elder’s Shooting. Police Think Something National May Develop in Affair,” the article states that Boyard worked in the 10<sup>th</sup> precinct.

were performing their duties.<sup>60</sup> In addition to Corporal Boyard's responsibility for his squad, he had the obligation to "report to [Boyard's] superior officers all delinquencies, carelessness or non-performance of duty on the part of the men in [his] respective sections."<sup>61</sup> As a corporal, Boyard would have to assist his superior offices at all times with certain duties, such as inspections. It is feasible that Boyard had white officers as part of his squad, therefore going against the very principles of Jim Crow.

In 1913, Boyard retired from the force. In an article in the *Times Picayune*, entitled, "Police Board," the subheading reads "Corporal Boyard Retired." The article concludes, "Corporal Boyard has seen long service with the police force."<sup>62</sup> On several occasions, over Boyard's long career, the local paper records his achievements. For instance, on November 24, 1906, the *Daily Picayune* mentions that the Inspector of Police chose Boyard to detail a coveted position at an unnamed racetrack. The article states that the Inspector of Police chose Boyard along with other officers due to their hard work and diligence on the force.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Corporal Boyard was appointed to the Floor Committee for a benefit to honor fallen police officer Camblas "murdered by a band of blacks."<sup>64</sup> These two examples demonstrate that in a time of racial divide, Stephen Boyard worked alongside blacks and whites.

The New Orleans Public Library Louisiana Division/City Archives obituary project lists Stephen Boyard's death as occurring on March 21, 1916.<sup>65</sup> Boyard's longevity in the

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<sup>60</sup> *Manual of the Police Department of the City of New Orleans*, 1908, p.65

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Picayune*, May 1913

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Picayune*, "Rack Track Detail. Sergeant Treuchard Gets Best Plum and Will Command," November 24, 1906

<sup>64</sup> *Times Picayune*, "Camblas Benefit. Ball Will Be Given at Washington Artillery To-Night" December 12, 1907

<sup>65</sup> There is a discrepancy in Boyard's age at the time of his death. His confirmed birth year is 1854, which would have made him 62 not 60 in 1916.

police force is worth noting. Preliminary research shows that Boyard was an active and respected member of the police force. The year he retired, according to the Police Pension Fund, Boyard received a pension of \$301.93, while the highest-ranking retiring officer for that year, Captain Joseph Jagot, received \$660.00. Other corporals received from \$101.93 to \$461.93.<sup>66</sup> Boyard's presence and longevity in the force questions the grand narrative of Black policemen in New Orleans.

### **Louis J. Therence**

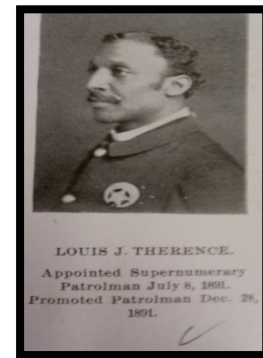
Louis Joseph Therence erroneously has been credited as being one of the last African American patrol officers in New Orleans in Post-Reconstruction New Orleans.<sup>67</sup> Research on his life has revealed an interesting path for a black man in New Orleans.

Therence was born in April of 1862 to Victorine Delite and Francis Therence.<sup>68</sup> At the time of the 1900 census, Louis

Therence was 39 years old and living on Jackson Avenue in the

Tenth Ward with his wife, Sally. In 1900, they had been married for 18 years and did not have children. Therence's mother-in-law, Sally Golden, and his niece Sally Johnson lived in the same household.

On April 29, 1882, the *Daily Picayune* mentions Therence under the heading wedding announcements. In 1887, at the age of 25 Therence appears in the newspaper for a non-police matter. As the research shows, Therence was co-proprietor and co-manager of



Louis J. Therence  
*New Orleans Police Department  
Commemorative Album, 1900*

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<sup>66</sup> *Annual Report of Board of Commissioners of the City of New Orleans 1908-1913*

<sup>67</sup> Historians Dennis Rousey and W. Marvin Dulaney make this claim.

<sup>68</sup> In the St. Augustine Register of Baptism for People of Color 1858-1871 vol. 3-A p.153, Act 3, Therence's name is recorded as "Joseph Louis Therence." His baptism record states his year of birth is 1862 and the 1900 US census record indicates his birth year as 1861. However, his death record indicates he died at the age of 47 in 1909, which is consistent to the baptism record. Evidence has not shown if Therence's parents were Free People of Color or slaves.

a New Orleans Minstrel Show. The notice reads, “The Reed and Therence New Orleans Minstrels, have large engagements on hand in Algiers, Gretna, Carrollton and the Avenue Theatre...Adelphus Reed and L. J. Therence are managers and proprietors.”<sup>69</sup> Later that year he reappears, on October 15, as recipient of a medal on his closing performance at *The Societe Juvenile*. According to the news article, the medal was neatly engraved and Therence was “real handsome.”<sup>70</sup> It is unclear what happened to his business endeavor as no other records have been found to determine his transition from impresario to police officer, or if both jobs overlapped. His participation in and ownership of a minstrel production is an example of the racial dichotomy of the city. On the one hand Therence profits from the racial stigmas and injustices portrayed on stage while wearing a police uniform that represents the opposite. His career also demonstrates the range of job possibilities in late 19<sup>th</sup> century New Orleans for African Americans.

Two years later, on February 16, 1889, a city weekly notes Therence as having created an independent and prosperous 24-member militia of which he was named captain.<sup>71</sup> Since his employment date is unclear, it could be assumed that his policing career began at this point. It is not until 1891, at the age of 30, that Therence appears in the official New Orleans police records. On July 8 of that year, the force appoints him to the position of Supernumerary Patrolman, and quickly promotes him to Patrolman on December 28.<sup>72</sup> His career lasted until 1909 when he died on January 22 at the age of 47. Police Surgeon H. Bayon’s annual report indicates Therence died of “diabetes [mellitus].”<sup>73</sup> An analysis of the

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<sup>69</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, “Rakings” April 23, 1887

<sup>70</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, “Rakings” October 15, 1887

<sup>71</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, “Gretna, LA” February 16, 1889

<sup>72</sup> *New Orleans Department Commemorative Album, 1900*

<sup>73</sup> *Annual Report of Board of Commissioners of the City of New Orleans 1908-1913*

Annual Reports of Board of Commissioners reveals that the families of officers who died in the line of duty were eligible to receive a monthly pension. The pension record does not indicate that Mrs. Therence received a pension, however.

Throughout his policing career, Therence appeared several times in the *Daily Picayune*. In an article under the heading “The Police Board,” the subheading reading, “Declares its Readiness to Co-operate with the District Attorney in Enforcing Laws,” he was charged with “gross neglect of duty” for “failing to arrest a party when requested to do so.”<sup>74</sup> However, the complaint was dismissed when the prosecution failed to present a case against Therence.

In November 8, 1900, a *Daily Picayune* article entitled, “The Police Board Hears Some Cases,” Therence appeared before the board for “tardiness.”<sup>75</sup> According to the editorial, Therence pleaded guilty to being late for his required appearance in the First City Criminal Court where he had made “an affidavit against a party for shooting and wounding.” He pleaded guilty to the charge with the understanding that by doing so he would have an opportunity to make a statement before the Police Board.

Subsequently, Therence claimed he was tardy to court because he had to be in Algiers to submit an affidavit before Recorder Barras. He stated he had been detained “too long,” and by the time he reached the second city criminal court, an attachment had already been issued. During the police board’s proceedings, Judge Aucion testified, “that Therence had failed to appear and he had ordered an attachment.” As soon as Therence arrived in court, at 11 o’clock, he was arrested. Therence maintained his story about being detained at

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<sup>74</sup> *Daily Picayune*, “Declares its Readiness to Co-operate with the District Attorney in Enforcing Laws,” February 15, 1894.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Picayune*, “The Police Board Hears Some Cases,” November 8, 1900

the Recorder's office. As a result, Judge Aucion requested that Sergeant Hevron investigate the matter. Sergeant's investigation revealed that Therence "had not made any affidavit."

Although Recorder Barras testified that Therence had indeed been in court to make an affidavit, the Judge filed a complaint. However, the judge added that he was "averse to committing an officer to the parish prison for contempt of court." Therefore, the Police Board found Therence guilty and docked him five days' pay, although Commissioner Chapman demanded the board fine him ten days instead. The Board reprimanded Therence when he failed to follow the rules, yet it cannot be substantiated that he was targeted based on his race. In the same article, as in other newspaper clippings, the Board also reprimanded white police officers for lesser offenses, such as holding unnecessary conversation or sitting while on the beat.

As a patrol officer, Therence had various responsibilities. He had to become "minutely familiar" with every aspect of his assigned beat, as well as become acquainted with all the members of the community within his beat. He was to obtain any information on suspicious characters, such as loiterers, people who wandered about at night, as well as strange vehicles, and submit all information to his supervising Commander. The police manual required Therence, along with his colleagues, to act civilized and "refrain from harsh or violent language," especially profanity. Smoking and drinking were strictly prohibited while on street duty or in uniform. Police officers were only allowed in barrooms on official police business.<sup>76</sup> Unless otherwise ordered, officers worked in isolation. In addition, the officer walked his beat at all times; he was not allowed to stand on street corners or elsewhere. Conversations were strictly limited to only persons of

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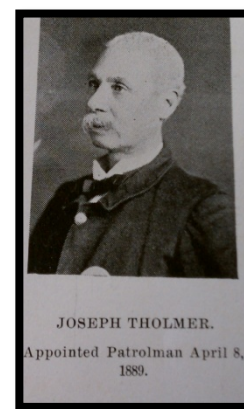
<sup>76</sup> *Manual of the Police Department of the City of New Orleans*, 1908

interest and according to the manual, officers were required to be polite and courteous at all times.<sup>77</sup>

Therence's life, as presented here, demonstrates the life of a black man who, despite the social and racial doctrine of the time, was able to achieve titles such as manager, proprietor, and police officer. He served the community through his employment with the force, walking the beat on hot summer days, keeping a watchful eye for perpetrators. Although the Board occasionally publicly reprimands him, it is not evidence of racially triggered attacks. The Board chastised him, as well as other officers, regardless of race, when caught in wrongdoings. Patrolman Therence's life is important to the grand narrative of New Orleans social and race relations.

### **Joseph Tholmer**

Joseph Tholmer is the third police officer presented in this case study. As with Louis Therence, historians have incorrectly credited Tholmer as being the last Black police officer on the New Orleans police force in this era. However, *City of New Orleans Police Department Annual Report* reports he is the last park patrolman" officer. Tholmer's personal information is scarce. According to the 1900 Census, Tholmer was born on August 1840.<sup>78</sup> At the time of the census, Tholmer was 59 years old. He listed himself as "Head" of the household with his occupation as "Policeman." He was married to Myrtle Tholmer for 24 years and they had



Joseph Tholmer  
*New Orleans Police Department  
Commemorative Album, 1900*

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Tholmer's baptismal record or birth certificate has not been located. However, his death record coincides with the information in the 1900 census.

five sons. Under “occupation,” the 1900 census lists two of his sons as “invalid.” The census of 1890, Joseph Tholmer had lived at 513 Bourbon Street.<sup>79</sup>

The earliest record found in the Annual Police Report of Joseph Tholmer dates from 1899. The report lists him as “patrolman”<sup>80</sup> until 1901 when his grade changed to “Park Patrolman.” Of the black officers mentioned in this case study Tholmer is the only one with the post of park patrolman. In fact, by 1905, he was the last park patrolman on the force, and he remained there until his death in 1909. The *City of New Orleans Police Department Annual Report* does not mention any other police officer as park patrolman after Tholmer.

Park Patrolman Tholmer’s obligations are unclear, because the Inspector of Police Rules and Regulations manual does not include a section entitled “Park Patrolmen.”<sup>81</sup> However, it is obvious that the force was eliminating this position, since after Tholmer’s death the manual does not record any other officer as park patrolman. Nevertheless, with some exceptions, it would appear that Tholmer’s obligations would be similar to that of a police officer.

Although the police report’s earliest record of Tholmer is in 1899, from 1878 to 1895 the *Daily Picayune* mentions his employment with the police force. In the first account, on June 17, 1878, Tholmer, along with officer Zambelle, arrested Arnold Joseph, referred to as a colored, for robbing \$15 from Chas Beauregard. A search by the officers confirmed that Joseph had the money in his possession. Tholmer and Zambelle transferred the suspect to “Bachemin’s Bastille.”<sup>82</sup> Later, in an article dated August 17, 1878, under the

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<sup>79</sup> New Orleans City Directories, 1890-1891

<sup>80</sup> *City of New Orleans Police Department Annual Report 1899-1907*

<sup>81</sup> *Manual of the Police Department of the City of New Orleans*, 1908

<sup>82</sup> Bachemin Bastille could be named after Chief of Police Zach Bachemin. See: Dennis C. Rousey, *Cops and Guns: Police Use of Deadly Force in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Jan., 1984), pp. 41-66



title, “The Police Commissioners, in Judgment of Erring [Officers] –More Resignations,” Tholmer pleaded guilty to a charge of “holding unnecessary conversation.” The article states he the Board reprimanded him but it did not offer further details. It must be noted, however, that a reprimand was not unusual; the Board of Commissioners reprimanded other officers for offenses such as “setting down on [the] beat,” and others were dropped from the rolls for “neglect on duty...fail[ing] to show up before the board... failing to appear for trial...[and] drunkenness.”<sup>83</sup>

However, other appearances by Tholmer in the local paper deserve mention. On July 15, 1884, an article titled “Mishaps and Misdeeds” mentioned that officers Tholmer and Murphy came upon an “unknown white man.” They found the man lying still on Marais Street, between Conti and Bienville. When the officers approached the man, they noticed that he was speechless and concluded the man was inebriated. The officers decided to transport the man to the Fourth Precinct Station. The article states, “On their arrival, however, they discovered that the unfortunate man was not drunk but dead.”

Tholmer was later involved in a more serious incident. On August 26, 1888, the local newspaper, again under the heading “Misdeeds and Mishaps,” related that officer Tholmer and Corporal Wattigny had arrested Ex-Recorder Thomas J. Mooney.<sup>84</sup> The officers took Mooney into custody after Mooney “discharged a pistol in his house” on Delaronde Street, then proceeding to the yard where he fired a second shot and a third shot into an open

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<sup>83</sup> *Daily Picayune*, “The Police Commissioners, in Judgment of Erring [Officers] –More Resignations” August 17, 1878

<sup>84</sup> Thomas J Mooney (1853-1908) was a Caucasian man who first appears to have served as Recorder of the Algiers Police Court in 1884. On January 15, 1887 the *Daily Picayune* reported that the Grand Jury “returned a true bill against [him] for assaulting a young woman,” adding that he was a “respectable young gentleman when he entered politics, but evil associations have corrupted his good manners.” As a result, his constituents petitioned for his impeachment. By 1888, he had been removed from office and according to his obituary he owned and operated a saloon until his death at 55 years old.

field. The article concluded, “The prisoner was found to have received a slight wound on the first finger of the right hand, where one of the bullets grazed him,” adding “the police report that Mooney was inebriated.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, an African American officer arrested a white New Orleanian. The last mention of Tholmer in the local paper was on December 1, 1895, under the titled “Police Transfers.”<sup>86</sup> Tholmer, with Patrolman Ruiz, was relieved of his duties with the Eleventh Precinct and they returned to their respective precincts.

On February 13, 1909, according to Police Surgeon H. Bayon, Patrolman Tholmer died in service of chronic [cystitis] at the age of 68.<sup>87</sup> Although the pension rolls do not mention whether his wife received any funds, his name does appear in the Civil War Pension Index, which would indicate his family probably did receive a pension.<sup>88</sup> However, the index card does not indicate the amount of his pension.

Just as the other men examined in this paper, Tholmer’s life and accomplishments during this period in New Orleans speaks to the discrepancy of race relations in the city. The Board reprimanded Tholmer, as well as Therence, for misbehavior, but as stated, the Board did not single them out based on race. During Jim Crow when the law supported the segregation of Blacks and whites, a major public organization employed and armed black officers to patrol their community requiring each police officer to arrest New Orleanians regardless of race.

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<sup>85</sup> *Daily Picayune*, “Misdeeds and Mishaps” August 26, 1888

<sup>86</sup> *Daily Picayune*, “Police Transfers” December 1, 1895

<sup>87</sup> *Annual Report of Board of Commissioners of the City of New Orleans 1908-1913*

Tholmer’s obituary is not included in the New Orleans Public Library Obituary database. However, the New Orleans, Louisiana, death records index confirms he died on February 13, 1909, at the age of 69.

<sup>88</sup> National Archives and Records Administration Database: Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934

## **VI. Conclusion**

Historians have researched the use of Blacks as policing agents during Colonial Louisiana until the force's segregation in the 1830 and then its reintegration after the Civil War. In colonial Louisiana, Louisianans of African descent, as has been demonstrated, served as policing agents specifically with uprising and apprehending runaways. Shortly before and during the Civil War New Orleans military officials continued their reliance on all Black people willing to preserve the nation as in the case of militias. Reconstruction revived the use of Blacks as policemen in the newly formed New Orleans Metropolitan Police. Yet, historians generally have ended their research of black policemen in Post-Reconstruction.

The lives and careers of the men discussed here argue that despite hardening racial attitudes in Post Reconstruction South, in New Orleans opportunity still existed for African Americans to serve in positions of authority, perhaps a heritage of the city's earlier tri-partite racial order. This information counters the widely held belief that African American presence during this period was completely defined by Jim Crow. Consequently, the experience of these police officers calls for a wider investigation of African Americans in other fields of endeavor. The rich history of Blacks as policemen holding positions of authority and respect in an era seeped in racial discord further illuminates the complexity of race relations in New Orleans.

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## Vita

Vanessa Flores-Robert was born on May 19, 1976, in Santa Monica, California and moved to New Orleans, Louisiana at the age of five. Her parents returned to Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico when she was 16 and she graduated from *Liceo Alberto del Canto* in 1995. After attending *El Tecnológico de Saltillo*, she returned to New Orleans in 2001 and enrolled at the University of New Orleans in 2004. She received her Bachelor of Arts in History in 2006. She has taught Spanish in the public and private schools in the New Orleans Metropolitan area for 5 years. She belongs to Phi Alpha Theta.