

Abbreviated portion of article about the Dupard brothers in Spanish New Orleans

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Setting: Jose and Carlos Dupard living in Spanish New Orleans during Spanish control of the city, as free mulattoes in the late 1700s. *Coartación*, a Spanish law allowing slaves to buy their freedom was actively being challenged by French masters attempting to regain aspects of the former slavery status quo. Free men of color worked toward establishing their own style of masculinity and respectability in the same manner as white men did...through land ownership, slave ownership, patronage, and participation in the colonial militias.

"Jose and Carlos Dupard, living in New Orleans in the late eighteenth century, were descended from Pedro Delille Dupard, a French patriarch and plantation owner. In the mid-eighteenth century, Pedro Delille Dupard lived with his wife Jacqueline Michel and their children on St. Anne Street in New Orleans. His brother, Pierre Joseph Delille Dupard, was also a prominent landowner in New Orleans and lived with his wife and children at their large cattle ranch at Cannes Brulées above Tchoupitoulas. Both the Delille Dupard men owned slaves and the cattle ranch at Cannes Brulées was home to 69 slaves by 1763. **As the patriarchs of elite wealthy Creole families Pedro and Pierre Delille Dupard embodied the ideals of masculinity in colonial Louisiana.** They had all the necessary titles, possessions and duties that made a man honorable and respected in colonial Louisiana: they were vecinos, or citizens of the city of New Orleans, owned large properties, served in the militia, were the masters of numerous slaves, and heads of their families.

"Land and slaves were concrete markers of wealth and prosperity in colonial New Orleans. But **illegitimate mulatto sons of respected white men**, such as Pedro Delille Dupard's sons Jose and Carlos, faced great challenges in establishing and maintaining their masculinity. While some mulatto sons inherited homes or slaves from their white fathers, most had to start from scratch in their accumulation of wealth. In their business dealings and in society in general, mulatto and Black men faced the racism of a slaveholding society that equated darker skin with slavery. Society viewed the masculinity of these free men of color as a threat and a challenge to the traditional patriarchy of white men. **Despite these challenging social conditions, Jose and Carlos Dupard were able to accrue many of the markers of masculinity and respect, such as land ownership and slaves, and proudly called themselves vecinos of New Orleans.**

"...the introduction of Spanish slave laws and attitude helped strengthen and solidify the position of free people of color in New Orleans.

"Interracial sexual relationships and the system of plaçage in colonial New Orleans are aspects of New Orleans's history that have received much attention from both scholars and popular media, but the focus of most of this scholarship is on the mulatto or quadroon woman, her relationship with white men, and her place in society. On the other hand, the history of the sociological status of free men of color has often been overlooked. Comparing and contrasting the lives of the Dupard men and the white Delille Dupards can illuminate the ambiguous and multifaceted roles that free men of color played in Spanish New Orleans society..."

"Plaçage was a recognized extralegal system in which white French and Spanish and later Creole men entered into the equivalent of common-law marriages with women of African, Indian and white Creole descent. The term comes from the French placer meaning "to place with". The women were not legally recognized as wives but were known as placées; their relationships were recognized among the free people of color as mariages de la main gauche or left-handed marriages. Many were often quarteronnes or quadroons, the offspring of a European and a mulatto, but plaçage did occur between whites and mulattoes and blacks. The system flourished throughout the French and Spanish colonial periods and apparently reached its zenith during the latter, between 1769 and 1803. It was not limited to Louisiana, but also flourished in the cities of Natchez and Biloxi, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; St. Augustine and Pensacola, Florida; as well as Saint-Domingue. Plaçage, however, drew most of its fame, and notoriety, from its open application in New Orleans. Despite the prevalence of interracial encounters in the colony, not all Creole women of color were or became placées." – *Descriptive definition from definitions.net*