



*Saint-Dominguan Refugees of  
African Descent and the Forging of  
Ethnic Identity in Early National  
Philadelphia*

**B**ETWEEN 1791 AND 1804, free and enslaved migrants fleeing revolution in the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue made their way to Philadelphia. White Saint-Dominguans were drawn by the city's trade connections with the Caribbean and the presence of a large Francophone community. Roughly four thousand refugees resided in the Delaware River Valley between 1791 and 1810, including over seven hundred enslaved Saint-Dominguans and perhaps one hundred free people of color.<sup>1</sup> Existing gradual emancipation legislation in Pennsylvania allowed the majority of enslaved migrants to move from slavery to indentured servitude and, eventually, to freedom.

The first and second generations of migrants created a black Francophone community in Philadelphia that lasted at least into the

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<sup>1</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 140–42; Nash, "Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Dominguans in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 65 (special supplemental

1830s; it was built upon commonalities of language, religion, and the shared experience of revolutionary upheaval. These migrants kept French names, took up family vocations, married one another, and participated in the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. But not all migrants of African descent fully took part in this regeneration and maintenance of ethnic identity. Many left Philadelphia for Haiti. Some who remained in Philadelphia allied themselves with the Philadelphia's black elite and joined the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, became officers in black fraternal lodges, attended schools run by Protestant clergymen, or associated with the leading figures of this community. Some took a middle course and married black Philadelphians and established a social and economic presence in the larger community—as a result of economic opportunities and residential proximity—while they retained cultural connections such as religion. Others vanished from the historical record.

While varying patterns of assimilation must be acknowledged, for a significant number of these migrants ethnic identity was important. For some, that identity slowed assimilation into broader African American communities even as it aided in the creation of strong socioeconomic networks. Social class, language, and cultural practices influenced the speed with which black Saint-Domingans assimilated and the company they kept. Such factors reflected different interests among both black Saint-Domingans and black Philadelphians and suggest that speaking of an overarching black community oversimplifies the cultural and socioeconomic realities of the day.

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Pennsylvania's gradual emancipation legislation required slave-owning Saint-Domingans living in the state longer than six months to free their slaves, although a large number of manumitted Saint-Domingans were then indentured to their former owners, as custom dictated, generally

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issue, 1998): 51; Susan Branson, "St. Domingan Refugees in the Philadelphia Community in the 1790s," in *Amerindians/Africans/Americans: Three Papers in Caribbean History* (Mona, Jamaica, 1993), 71–72, 81n9. Over twenty-five thousand refugees arrived in American ports through 1810. For further analysis of the extent of Saint-Domingan emigration, see Ashli White, "A Flood of Impure Lava: Saint Domingan Refugees in the United States, 1791–1820" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2003), 3; John Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color: Black Saint-Domingan Refugees and African-American Communities in the Early Republic" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2008), 44, 148–54.

until they were twenty-eight years old.<sup>2</sup> Working and living conditions strained relations between Saint-Dominguan masters and servants. During the 1790s, enslaved and indentured Saint-Dominguans expressed their dissatisfaction with their conditions of service through disobedience and flight. This behavior often indicated a fraying of social ties with white Saint-Dominguan masters and mistresses and could have allowed for increasing contact with other Philadelphians, whether on the city's streets or in jail.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1793 and 1804, twenty-one black Saint-Dominguans (fifteen males and six females) resided for varying periods of time in Philadelphia's almshouse.<sup>4</sup> This relatively small number may have reflected restrictive admission requirements and oppressive conditions inside the almshouse. For many black Saint-Dominguans, indentured servitude—in meeting basic needs for day-to-day survival—gave at least a minimal level of economic security and also provided vocational skills that would be useful after terms of indenture had been fulfilled. Just as for free African Americans, domestic service, where “shelter, food, and clothing were assured,” provided a means of avoiding public care, if at the cost of remaining tied to former masters.<sup>5</sup> Domestic service also helped some Saint-Dominguans gain valuable work experience. In 1798, Saint-Dominguan planter Charles Laurent reported his employment of “two Negroes,” Sambou and Azor, in “making wooden Boxes, [and] making or mending Umbrellas.” Saint-Dominguan barbers, carpenters, cooks, hair-

<sup>2</sup>James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders, comp., *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801*, vol. 10, 1779–1781 (Harrisburg, PA, 1904), 69–71, and vol. 13, 1787–1790 (Harrisburg, PA, 1908), 53; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991); Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), 136–37.

<sup>3</sup>Nash, “Reverberations of Haiti,” 56–57, 71nn54–58, 71nn60–62; Simon Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 2003), 1–10, 43–45. For examples, see Prison Vagrant Docket, May 31, 1790–Dec. 29, 1797, Record Group 38.44, pp. 101–434, Philadelphia City Archives.

<sup>4</sup>Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick, “Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint-Domingan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia,” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Charleston, SC, 2001), 197; Guardians of the Poor, Admissions, 1785–1805, Record Group 35.110, Philadelphia City Archives. The name “John Baptist” is recorded three times between February 1801 and March 1803.

<sup>5</sup>Branson and Patrick, “Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange,” 197. See also Billy G. Smith and Cynthia Shelton, “The Daily Occurrence Docket of the Philadelphia Almshouse, 1800,” *Pennsylvania History* 52 (1985): 87; Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 173.

dressers, and seamstresses listed in nineteenth-century city directories often gained those skills as personal servants or domestics.<sup>6</sup>

Saint-Dominguans of African descent who arrived free in Philadelphia did not have to worry about obligations to a master or mistress. Individually, however, the experiences of these refugees varied greatly, and there were several ways in which black Saint-Dominguans may have come into contact with both black and white Philadelphians. Writing in the 1820s, William McKoy, a long-time employee of the Bank of North America who used the pen name “Lang Syne,” reminisced on how, during the 1790s, “Mestizo Ladies, with complexions of the palest marble, jet black hair, and eyes of the gazelle, and of the most exquisite symmetry were to be seen, escorted along the pavement, by white French Gentlemen.” Yet other free Saint-Dominguans of color struggled to find shelter and subsistence.<sup>7</sup>

Though free Saint-Dominguans of color are not clearly identified among those seeking public relief through the almshouse, the minutes of charity organizations like the Society of Friends’ Female Society for the Relief of the Distressed note a few Saint-Dominguan aid recipients. A female Friend distributing charity in the late autumn of 1795 recorded giving two “[F]rench Mulattoes in great want of clothing 8 yards Coating, and 7/6 in Cash to the latter.”<sup>8</sup> A small number of free people of color turned to crime to survive. Between 1794 and 1806, twenty-four clearly identifiable black Saint-Dominguans were convicted of crimes other than vagrancy in Philadelphia courts. Of these, all except one were convicted of larceny for either stealing or receiving stolen goods. At least

<sup>6</sup> Laurent’s report may be found in Landing Reports of Aliens, 1798–1807, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vol. 1, image 5, pp. 2–3, accessed online through Records Group 21, Archival Research Catalog, National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/index.html> (accessed Dec. 15, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Lang Syne, “Our City,” *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia) (hereafter *Poulson’s*), Apr. 8, 1828; John K. Alexander, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760–1800* (Amherst, MA, 1980), 79; Leslie Patrick-Stamp, “Numbers that Are Not New: African Americans in the County’s First Prison, 1790–1835,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 119 (1995): 121–28. Gary B. Nash estimated that perhaps seventy free Saint-Dominguans of color came to Philadelphia during the 1790s. Nash, “Reverberations of Haiti,” 59.

<sup>8</sup> *Gales’s Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia), Jan. 3, 1797; Minutes of the Female Society for the Relief of the Distressed, 4; and “Extracts from the Minutes of the Female Society for the Relief of the Distressed, Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor,” The Notebook of Catherine W. Norris, 1802, (quotation), both from Quaker Collection, Magill Library, Haverford College.

some of those convicted—perhaps as many as thirteen—were free people of color.<sup>9</sup>

At the other extreme, the Caribbean-born émigré Moreau de St. Méry noted, “the French colored women live in the most obnoxious luxury in Philadelphia, and since this luxury can only be provided by the French and by former French colonials, the contrast of their condition with the misery of the mass of their compatriots is revolting.”<sup>10</sup> Moreau’s comment reflects attitudes and practices brought from the French Caribbean; a number of Saint-Dominguan women of color, some free, some enslaved, may have been prostitutes or mistresses of white French and Saint-Dominguan refugees.<sup>11</sup> Moreau singled out French men, yet sexual commerce may have brought black Saint-Dominguan women into contact with Anglo Philadelphians as well as an easing of sexual mores, including the begrudging acceptance of prostitution in Philadelphia during the 1790s.<sup>12</sup>

Intimate relationships, aid from private charity, or time spent in jail or the almshouse likely brought Saint-Dominguans of African descent, male and female, free, enslaved, and indentured, into contact with both black and white Americans and furthered their assimilation into life in

<sup>9</sup> County Prison Sentence Dockets, vol. 1, 1794–1803, pp. 2, 19, 21, 23, 28, 54, 127, 174, 200, 205, 224, 226–27, 242–43, 247, 277; vol. 2, 1803–1810, p. 32, Record Group 38.36, Philadelphia City Archives. The name Figaro is listed (and counted here) twice, once for a felony charge, the other for receiving stolen goods. County Prison Sentence Dockets, vol. 1, pp. 127, 226. Some black Saint-Dominguans were charged with crimes but were not prosecuted or were acquitted. In the Mayor’s Court, twelve cases of larceny or related crimes were forfeited or dismissed between 1793 and 1804. Mayors Court Dockets, vol. 5, 1793–1796, pp. 357, 375, 389, 400, 402; vol. 6, 1796–1802, pp. 150, 175, 219, 250, 414, 554, 578; vol. 7, 1802–1804, p. 156, Record Group 130.1, Philadelphia City Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, trans., eds., *Moreau de Saint-Méry’s American Journey, 1793–1798* (Garden City, NY, 1947), 309.

<sup>11</sup> David P. Geggus, “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue,” in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington, IN, 1996), 265, 270.

<sup>12</sup> Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730–1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 193–96, 212. Of course, free Saint-Dominguan women of color filled a range of economic roles that did not commodify their sexuality, whether in the towns and cities of Saint-Domingue as retailers and marketers, or in the United States in similar retail roles, or as cooks, bakers, or dressmakers. Geggus, “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue,” 270; *Register of Trades of Colored People in the City of Philadelphia and Districts* (Philadelphia, 1838), 3–8; Philadelphia African-American Census 1847 online database, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/paac1847/index.html> (accessed Nov. 6, 2008); Whittington B. Johnson, *Black Savannah: 1788–1864* (Fayetteville, AR, 1996), 68–70, 72–75. My thanks to Emma Lapsansky-Werner for directing me to the 1847 census database.

Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> Some migrants' movements through the city's jail and poorhouse could have led to identification with members of Philadelphia's underclass. The various duties of Saint-Dominguan domestics would have led them to associate with black and white Philadelphians, and the relative youth of so many migrants would have facilitated their learning English. These experiences, however, did not constitute assimilation into a "black community." As male and female migrants of African descent from rural Pennsylvania, the greater mid-Atlantic, the Upper South, and the Caribbean made their way to the city, socioeconomic distinctions limited notions of a cohesive community.

An elite quickly emerged among black Philadelphians, embodied by the leaders of the Free African Society (FAS), created in 1787, and of the fraternal African Lodge, which "functioned to define and strengthen the elite."<sup>14</sup> Yet the membership of the FAS also reflected differences of wealth, status, and interests that suggest the existence of overlapping African American "communities" in the city. Even in Philadelphia's African American churches, which more fully engaged the concerns of ordinary black Philadelphians, social differences were evident, with elites tending to favor St. Thomas's African Episcopal Church over the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church.<sup>15</sup> For their part, poor blacks migrating to Philadelphia had more in common with impoverished black Philadelphians. Together, both groups may have formed a "shadow community," one that interacted with poor whites more than with black elites and that rejected the latter's middling values.<sup>16</sup>

For black Saint-Dominguans, assimilation was strongest among the elite. By the early 1800s, a few free Saint-Dominguans of color intermingled with members of the African American elite in the formative institutions of black Philadelphia. After 1808, black Saint-Dominguans, such as John and Ann Appo and Thomas Depee, attended the African

<sup>13</sup> For further treatment of the experiences of Saint-Dominguans of African descent in 1790s Philadelphia, see Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color," 44–80.

<sup>14</sup> Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia, 1988), 4–9, quotation from 7.

<sup>15</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 98–104, 109–28. My thanks to Emma Lapsansky-Werner for pointing out class differences between the two churches. For social tensions within St. Thomas's, see Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York, 2002), 225–26.

<sup>16</sup> In her work on Cincinnati's nineteenth-century black community, Nikki M. Taylor has written of a "shadow community" at the heart of post-Civil War black Cincinnati, one "that differed from the larger black community." Taylor argues that these "black shadow-dwellers used popular culture and crime to create identity and wage protest." Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802–1868* (Athens, OH, 2005), 186.

Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. By 1813, Depee was also a member and officer of Philadelphia's African Lodge, an elite fraternal organization where men like James Forten, Richard Allen, and Absalom Jones served as officers.<sup>17</sup> Whether the Appos and Depee made a keen appraisal of the social and economic opportunities in black Philadelphia, where many movers and shakers worshipped as Protestants, or whether assimilation marked a conscious break from a French colonial identity and a move towards a newfound cultural autonomy cannot be determined from the existing evidence. But it marked one response to life in Philadelphia for black Saint-Dominguan migrants.

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While evidence from the 1790s suggests movement toward assimilation by elite black Saint-Dominguans, others slowly began to develop an ethnic identity based on ties of kinship, language, and religion, albeit tempered by daily contact with white and black Philadelphians through work and places of residence. The location of political and cultural institutions was an important factor in the creation of such an identity. Many white refugees settled with other French-speaking exiles along Second, Third, and Fourth streets, from Front Street out to Eighth Street. They often lodged in boarding houses, which placed them in close proximity to the French consulate and Roman Catholic churches, such as St. Joseph's, on Willings Alley just off of Fourth Street, and St. Mary's, at Fourth between Locust and Spruce.<sup>18</sup>

If not living in white households, or once free from the obligations of indenture, black Saint-Dominguans, over time, began to move into other neighborhoods. For many, however, the Roman Catholic churches remained central to their lives.<sup>19</sup> These churches were centers of social and economic networks formed by family and friends. Black Saint-

<sup>17</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 109–28; African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Register Records (Absalom Jones, Rector): Births and Baptisms, 100, 104–5, 109, 113, 120, 127, African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas archives, Philadelphia; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 134, 144–49; Minutes of the African Lodge, Philadelphia, 1797–1800, 1813–1815, in Records of the African Lodge at Boston, Part A, Letters and Sermons (microfilm), Library of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge, Boston.

<sup>18</sup> Frances Sergeant Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790–1800: An American Chapter of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1940), 103–4, 110; Joseph G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1907), 87.

<sup>19</sup> A Saint-Dominguan-descended family history noted the existence of a so-called “colored French Colonial Settlement” at Fourth and Spruce streets in the early nineteenth century. A search

Dominguan men and women married one another and baptized their children within the Catholic Church throughout the nineteenth century. Catholic Masses were not integrated, but there were few African American Catholics at that time.<sup>20</sup>

At least 118 baptisms involving people of African descent from the French Caribbean took place between 1793 and 1810. Through the 1790s, many of those who were baptized—adults and children—had white Saint-Dominguan sponsors. By the early 1800s, these sponsors tended to be black Saint-Dominguans.<sup>21</sup> This shift may be indicative of the fact that more migrants were completing their indentures after 1800.

Marriages involving black Saint-Dominguans increased only after 1813, with most Saint-Dominguans apparently marrying other Saint-Dominguans. Whether these marriages were between migrants who waited to be free of their indentures, those who arrived while very young, more recent arrivals, or second generation Saint-Dominguans is unclear. At least ninety-four marriages involving black Saint-Dominguans took place in the period between 1794 and 1830. The largest number of marriages, some fifty, took place between 1812 and 1818. Fourteen of the black Saint-Dominguans who married at St. Joseph's between 1800 and 1830 wed black Philadelphians rather than fellow Saint-Dominguans. The frequency of such marriages did not increase over time; it remained steady, with rarely more than one occurring per year. Even witnesses tended to be Saint-Dominguan, suggesting again the strong ties of family and friendship among these migrants.<sup>22</sup>

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of census records did not uncover evidence of this settlement. Typescript drafts of family history, box 18, folder 2, p. 8 and box 19, folder 1, p. 11, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers, 1913–1983, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. More research needs to be done on the residences of Saint-Dominguan domestics to determine whether they lived in the homes of those they served or in nearby dwellings.

<sup>20</sup> P. Aloysius Jordan, "Historical Narrative of St. Joseph's Church," *Woodstock Letters* 4 (1873): 104; Nash, "Reverberations of Haiti," 59; Branson and Patrick, "Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange," 202–3.

<sup>21</sup> One hundred and five of those baptized were children. Relevant baptismal registers for St. Joseph's are found in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 16 (1905)–19 (1908). Evidence of assimilation may also be found in the registers with the 1802 baptism of John Louis Smith. While his parents were identified as "Protestant negroes," and do not appear to be Saint-Dominguan, his sponsors were. But this relationship seems to be an exception in ethnoreligious affiliations among Saint-Dominguans. *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 18 (1907): 237.

<sup>22</sup> *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 20 (1909): 22–48, 122–92, 290–341. I am grateful for the efforts of Ms. Mary Jane Green and the late Ms. Bobbye Burke, of Old St. Joseph's Church Archives, in compiling a list of Saint-Dominguan baptisms and marriages at that church.



Demographic change complicated both cultural autonomy and assimilation. As many as five hundred black Saint-Dominguans resided in Philadelphia after 1810. Population losses through death and emigration, with some four hundred migrants returning to Haiti by 1805, were only partly offset by births and either new immigration or in-migration. Yet new arrivals had an impact beyond their numbers. Dozens of migrants, both families and individuals, continued to arrive in Philadelphia—whether from the Caribbean or elsewhere in the United States—throughout the early nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Limited socioeconomic opportunities, political tensions, and contact with friends or family may have drawn former refugees northward to Philadelphia.

While interaction with kin or with new arrivals may have strengthened ethnic identification in the short term, a lack of further immigration as well as expanding commercial ties with black and white Philadelphians would facilitate assimilation in the long run. The 1811 Philadelphia directory contains the names of at least sixty-five persons of African descent with French names.<sup>24</sup> They represented a number of trades and occupations, but their social status on arriving in Philadelphia is unknown.<sup>25</sup> Nearly a decade later, small clusters of black Saint-Dominguans could be found throughout the city, but with concentrations of black households in Cedar, New Market, and Locust wards, as well as Southwark. Like African American households of the period, the majority of black Saint-Dominguan households recorded in the 1820 federal census had neither large numbers of adults nor large numbers of extended family members living under one roof.<sup>26</sup>

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This information is taken from church registers and the *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*. That list was also used in my research. For notes on the calculation of these numbers, see Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color," 87nn5–6.

<sup>23</sup> "Pencil Pusher Points," *Philadelphia Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1912; Transcript drafts of family history, box 18, folder 1, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers; Philadelphia, 1800–1850; Passenger and Immigration Lists, Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed June 30, 2008). In 1804 and 1805, French officials claimed that black Saint-Dominguan refugees were returning to Haiti, with at least one ship carrying emigrants from Philadelphia. These officials feared that the emigrants meant to help defend the recently established state of Haiti; Haitian ruler Dessalines reportedly encouraged the return of black Saint-Dominguans by offering forty dollars per person. Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776–1891* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1941), 162–64, 173–74; Julie Winch, *American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti* (San Germán, Puerto Rico, 1988), 1–2; Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color," 108.

<sup>24</sup> Nash, "Reverberations of Haiti," 59–60.

<sup>25</sup> *Census Directory for 1811* (Philadelphia, 1811), 366–84.

<sup>26</sup> Emma Jones Lapsansky, *Neighborhoods in Transition: William Penn's Dream and Urban Reality* (New York, 1994), 74–78; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 166–67.

Black Saint-Dominguan households on Shippen Street (now Bainbridge) included laborers and sawyers. A variety of artisans, craftsmen, tradesmen, and other middling entrepreneurs, especially hairdressers, as well as a teacher, lived on Gaskill Street, Lombard Street, and on Fifth and Sixth streets near St. Joseph's, as well as on a number of alleys and smaller streets. In a few instances, more than one household resided at the same address, but more commonly a few households clustered close to one another on a given street. These households were interspersed with African American and, occasionally, white households, presenting opportunities for interaction, whether between neighbors or business owners and customers.<sup>27</sup>

Among those migrants involved in business ventures were members of the Augustin, Baptiste, and Dutrieuille families, who quickly established themselves in various crafts and trades. Pierre Augustin, who came to Philadelphia around 1816, established a successful catering business. Eugene Baptiste Sr., who most likely arrived in the United States as a boy by 1818, ran both a cabinetmaking shop and a catering business with his wife, Mathilda Grey, whom he had met in the United States. Pierre Eugene Dutrieuille, a shoemaker, and his wife, Mary Lambert, arrived in the city sometime before 1838, when one of their two sons, Pierre (also known as Peter) Albert Dutrieuille, was born. All of these families were most likely free Saint-Dominguans of color.<sup>28</sup>

Other black Saint-Dominguans, male and female alike, met with at least some success as entrepreneurs and tradesmen into the 1830s. The 1838 *Register of Trades of Colored People*, commissioned by the

<sup>27</sup> Edward Whiteley, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register for 1820* (Philadelphia, 1820).

<sup>28</sup> "Pencil Pusher Points." While the "Pencil Pusher" and others marked them as Saint-Dominguans, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton described Augustin as being from Paris, France, and Peter Albert Dutrieuille's father, Pierre Eugene, as being originally from Bourdeaux, France. Yet elsewhere Shelton wrote that Augustin's daughter reported her father as being from the French Caribbean (Haiti is indicated as Augustin's country of birth in the 1880 census). It is possible that while originally from Saint-Domingue or elsewhere in the French Caribbean, they may have taken refuge in France before coming to the United States. Transcript drafts of family history, box 18, folder 1, 10/19/78, p. 25, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers; U.S. Census, 1880, Philadelphia, enumeration district 146, p. 26, Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed July 25, 2009). Family tradition has Eugene Baptiste founding his cabinet-making business in 1818, but census information from four decades places his birth around 1811, the year he and his mother supposedly arrived in Philadelphia. Given that his children were all under the age of ten in the 1850 census, when Baptiste was listed as being thirty-eight years old, it seems likely that Baptiste was born in the early 1800s. The earliest reference to Baptiste appears to be in the 1838 *Register of Trades*, where he is listed as a cabinetmaker. U.S. Census, 1850, Philadelphia, Locust Ward, p. 128 (image 83), Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; *Register of Trades*, 4.

Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS), lists at least sixteen black Saint-Dominguans, sharing eight names and involved in as many trades. Though most were men, women, such as dressmaker Delphine Alzier, were also listed.<sup>29</sup> The services these people provided, and the location of their places of business, suggest a traffic that would have included white and black Philadelphians as well as other French Caribbean migrants.

Many of these family names—Baptiste, Depee, and Duterte (spelled as Dutair in the 1837 census), for example—can also be found in the 1847 PAS census of black Philadelphians. Oysterman Dulique Grohege also appears in both the 1837 and 1847 censuses with (presumably) Mrs. Grohege, a seamstress. Stephen Cuyjet was listed as a dressmaker, although his name was misspelled as “Guyjet.”<sup>30</sup> The socioeconomic stability of these families suggests the formation of a viable community among black Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia.

In the 1830s, as in the early 1800s, very few Saint-Dominguans played a role in black religious denominations, educational institutions, cultural endeavors, or fraternal organizations. Saint-Dominguans like Francis A. Duterte and John Dupee took part in African American social and political movements such as the Negro Convention movement and the American Moral Reform Society.<sup>31</sup> Yet these men were exceptions. The relative lack of Saint-Dominguan participation in the cultural and social life of black Philadelphia suggests that, among middling and elite Saint-Dominguans, ethnic identification held particular strength during the first half of the nineteenth century. Even families like the Appos, whose sons were William and Joseph, did not completely sever contacts with Haiti. William Appo married in Port-au-Prince in March 1828. Joseph

<sup>29</sup> *Register of Trades*, 3–8. The *Register* cannot be taken as the last word on black tradesmen, as other materials collected for the *Register* list several other occupations not included in the published version. See Committee to Visit the Colored People Census Facts, 1838, series 4: Manumissions, Indentures, and Other Legal Papers, microfilm reel 26, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>30</sup> Philadelphia African-American Census 1847 online database.

<sup>31</sup> African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Register Records (Absalom Jones, Rector): Births and Baptisms; Whiteley, *Philadelphia Directory and Register for 1820*; Arthur Donaldson, “An Account,” *Juvenile Magazine* 3 (1813): 2–7, 10–15, 19–21; Minutes of the African Lodge, Philadelphia, 1813–1815 (microfilm); Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite*, 128–29; Peter P. Hinks, ed., *Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, Accounts 1854–1857*, Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 37, [http://www.hsp.org/files/vigilancecommitteeofphiladelphia\\_master.pdf](http://www.hsp.org/files/vigilancecommitteeofphiladelphia_master.pdf) (accessed Dec. 18, 2007); “An Address,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, Nov. 23, 1855, in African American Newspapers, Accessible Archives, <http://www.accessible.com/accessible/index.jsp> (accessed Dec. 17, 2007).

Appo died in Port-au-Prince in December 1829.<sup>32</sup>

Many of those black Saint-Dominguans who worshipped as Roman Catholics and married one another, however, had little intention of venturing to Haiti. In fact, one development that would have seemed to join black Philadelphians and Saint-Dominguans in common cause was marked instead by the relative indifference of black Saint-Dominguans. The cause was African American emigration to Haiti in the 1820s. Beginning in 1824, through the efforts of the Haytien Emigration Society of Philadelphia, some five hundred African Americans sailed for Haiti.<sup>33</sup> While Joseph Cassey, a businessman of French West Indian origin, served as treasurer of the Emigration Society, it is not clear whether any former black Saint-Dominguans or Haitians were passengers on these ships.

Though departing passenger lists have not been found, it seems unlikely that they included any Saint-Dominguans. The example of the Appo family indicates that travel between the United States and Haiti by black Saint-Dominguans was not unheard of.<sup>34</sup> But Haitians or black Saint-Dominguans wishing to go to Haiti would not necessarily have done so through the Haytien Emigration Society. Richard Allen and James Forten were leaders of the society in Philadelphia, and they held organizational meetings in Allen's Bethel A.M.E. Church in the summer of 1824. While conceived as an enterprise to escape the political and social oppression of white racism in the United States, the movement also had evangelical overtones, as seen in Bethel's interest in sending missionaries to Haiti.<sup>35</sup> The lack of black Saint-Dominguan involvement with

<sup>32</sup> Association de Généalogie d'Haiti, Archives d'Haiti database, <http://www.agh.qc.ca/indexen.html> (accessed Jan. 15, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 245, 337n95. See also the *National Gazette and Literary Register*, (hereafter *National Gazette*), Aug. 23, 1824; "Marine Register," Aug. 24, 1824; Sept. 20, 1824; "Hayti," Nov. 9, 1824; Feb. 1, 1825; and Feb. 24, 1825; and also "Emigration to Hayti" and "Extract of a letter from Harrison McKinley & Co.," *Poulson's*, Oct. 15, 1824 and Feb. 24, 1824.

<sup>34</sup> Sannet Legrane, a former slave, applied for almshouse relief in 1813 after her husband returned to Haiti. Charles Appo is listed in United States Customs records as arriving in Philadelphia from Haiti in June 1828; it is unclear if he was a member of the Philadelphia Appo family. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble*, 359; Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 1, 1825 through June 17, 1825, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Records Group 36, National Archives and Records Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes and Trial Book, 1822–1835, entries for Nov. 3, 21, and 22, 1824, microfilm reel 8, Records of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, 2008), 245–58; Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787–1863* (Urbana, IL, 1975), 77–78; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 244. See also Loring

the African Methodist Episcopal Church during the 1820s suggests one reason for disinterest in emigration. Those Saint-Dominguans still in Philadelphia would have had two decades to return to Haiti had they so desired. Memories of the violence and dislocation of the revolutionary period, and knowledge of ongoing political turmoil in Haiti, argued against return. Identification as a Saint-Dominguan did not necessarily mean that one felt kinship with the state of Haiti.<sup>36</sup>

In Philadelphia, language, religion, and marriage were means of expressing Saint-Dominguan ethnicity. This development of an ethnic identity only after leaving their homeland parallels the experiences of later European immigrants to the United States; it is also similar to the experiences of Saint-Dominguans in nineteenth-century New Orleans.<sup>37</sup> But, more importantly, free and enslaved migrants of African descent arriving in Philadelphia, as well as their descendants, must have appreciated the opportunities for social and economic advancement that were not available elsewhere in the United States, or even in Haiti. A few Saint-Dominguan families took full advantage of these opportunities as the nineteenth century progressed.

By the 1850s and 1860s, second and third generation black Saint-Dominguans were assimilating much more fully than had their parents or grandparents. But such assimilation still consisted of a range of responses to mainstream culture and society. Family and economic concerns, and the relative importance of culture—or, more frequently, religion—continued to shape individual responses to life in Philadelphia. The significant roles of some French Caribbean elites as social, economic, and cultural leaders among black Philadelphians helped define the place of second- and third-

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Daniel Dewey, *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour, in the United States* (New York, 1824) and various July 1824 issues of the *National Gazette* and *Poulson's*. For a differing interpretation of evangelical motives among emigrants, one that argues that religion played less of a role in emigration, see Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT, 2000), 36–37.

<sup>36</sup> As it was, beginning in the spring and summer of 1825, many emigrants returned to the United States—perhaps as many as one-third by 1826. By 1860, an observer claimed that none of the remaining emigrants were living on the land granted them and that a “considerable number” had left Haiti entirely. Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 40–41; Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*, 81–82; Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans: and on the Mulatto as a Race for the Tropics* (Philadelphia, 1860), 4–6, 12. See also Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1825 and 1826, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Records Group 36, National Archives and Records Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region.

<sup>37</sup> Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville, FL, 2007), 54–56.

generation black Saint-Dominguans in the larger communities of Philadelphia.

By the 1850s, the so-called “guild of the caterers,” a subset of Philadelphia’s black elite, was prominent in black Philadelphia. African American restaurateurs and caterers wielded considerable social and economic influence in Philadelphia throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. This group’s rise resulted from economic competition among black Philadelphians and white natives and immigrants, who limited opportunities for blacks in a range of trades and crafts after 1820. One avenue for advancement lay in “[developing] certain lines of home service into a more independent and lucrative employment”; those black servants and waiters able to do so prospered after 1840.<sup>38</sup> Saint-Dominguans, like members of the Augustin, Baptiste, and Dutrieuille families, were among these successful black entrepreneurs.

While many black Saint-Dominguans must have faced economic difficulties in the period following the Civil War, wealthier Saint-Dominguans continued to leave their mark in the historical record. By the 1860s, more members of this elite group were joining ranks with the larger black elite in Philadelphia. Unlike members of the Appo and Depee families in the first half of the nineteenth century, however, these new elites did not fully adopt the cultural and religious values of the majority. While second-generation Saint-Dominguans learned English, not all spoke it at home. Peter Albert Dutrieuille spoke French and often did so with relatives who did not or would not speak English. Yet Dutrieuille’s sister-in-law Clara Baptiste Augustin was reported as stating, “When my father [Eugene Baptiste] would start to speak to us in French, my mother would say, ‘No-no, Eujen! Speak in English. Our children are being reared in this country where they were born; they must speak correct English.’”<sup>39</sup> For his part, Peter Albert Dutrieuille spoke English with his children and grandchildren. Given the small number of Saint-Dominguans in Philadelphia, it must have seemed necessary.

<sup>38</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899; repr., New York, 2007), 18–21. See also Roger Lane, *William Dorsey’s Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America* (New York, 1991), 112–13. Du Bois also noted the participation of caterers in political causes like abolition, although he mentioned no specific names. The only evidence of political activity by an Augustin, Baptiste, or Dutrieuille family member in the 1850s or 1860s involved P. Jerome Augustin (son of Pierre), who signed Frederick Douglass’s “Call to Arms,” an 1863 appeal for African American support of the Union cause. Lane, *William Dorsey’s Philadelphia and Ours*, 420–21.

<sup>39</sup> Transcript drafts of family history, box 19, folder 2, p. 6, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers.

The Catholic faith also remained a part of some Saint-Dominguans' cultural identity. By the 1870s, a historian of Old St. Joseph's Church noted, "most of [the] descendants [of the original refugees] have, through neglect, been seduced by the charms of a Methodist shout, and have been lost to the Catholic church." There may be some truth to this assertion; membership rolls of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church from the 1870s list at least ten people of possible black Saint-Dominguan descent.<sup>40</sup> Yet prominent French Caribbean families such as the Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles remained communicants within the Catholic Church. The second and third generations of these families married and raised their children in the church, even as they worked against the indifference and hostility of many white Catholic clergy and parishioners.<sup>41</sup>

Identification with the Catholic Church set these elite families apart to a degree. So, too, did family and economic ties. The Augustin, Baptiste, and Dutrieuille families, for example, were part of the "guild of the caterers." Related through marriage, members of the three families were also leaders in this community. Peter Albert Dutrieuille, son of shoemaker Pierre Eugene Dutrieuille, learned what he could of the catering business as an apprentice to Eugene and Mathilda Baptiste. In November 1864, Peter Albert married Amelia Baptiste, Eugene and Mathilda's second daughter. Clara, Eugene and Mathilda's oldest daughter, married Pierre and Mary Augustin's son Theodore sometime between 1870 and 1880. With the marriage, Pierre Augustin retired from the catering business, handing it over to his son and daughter-in-law; the Augustin and Baptiste catering firm maintained the international reputation Pierre and Mary Augustin had established.<sup>42</sup>

Through their family connections and Roman Catholic faith, the

<sup>40</sup> Jordan, "Historical Narrative of St. Joseph's Church," 104; Alphabetical Record of Members in Full Connection, microfilm reel 1, Records of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church.

<sup>41</sup> Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York, 1990), 132–36, 146–49; *Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses* (1893; repr., New York, 1978), 22, 132; Lane, *William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours*, 242–43.

<sup>42</sup> Marriage Registers, February 1835–May 1888, 132, Old St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Philadelphia; Transcript drafts of family history, box 18, folder 1, 10/19/78, p. 25, Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers. In the 1870 federal census, Clara Baptiste is listed as living in the household of her father; in the 1880 census she is married to Theodore. U.S. Census, 1870, Philadelphia, Ward 7, District 19, p. 394; U.S. Census, 1880, Philadelphia, Enumeration District 147, p. 451, both in Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed Aug. 28, 2008); Charles Frederick White, *Who's Who in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1912), 49–50.

Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles retained some elements of their French Caribbean cultural heritage, but they were also an integral part of African American social and economic networks and of the African American elite. Two branches of the Augustin family ran separate, profitable catering businesses in late nineteenth-century Philadelphia. P. Jerome Augustin's business, described as having "enjoyed a reputation as 'the Delmonico's of Philadelphia,'" was said to be worth fifty thousand dollars in 1879. The aforementioned Augustin and Baptiste catering business was estimated as being worth at least sixty thousand dollars some thirty years later. By 1873, Peter Albert Dutrieuille had launched his own catering business, one that he later handed down to his son, Albert Eugene; he would serve an "elite clientele, as well as the members of the Catholic hierarchy." While tastes in fine dining were changing by the end of the nineteenth century, leading to the decline of many African American catering houses, the French cuisine of the Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles remained very fashionable.<sup>43</sup>

Economic vitality translated into commercial and organizational connections. Peter Albert Dutrieuille helped organize the Caterers' Manufacturing and Supply Company and also served as president. He was also involved with the Philadelphia Caterers' Association. Caterers' Manufacturing and Supply Company, incorporated in 1895, purchased goods for resale to or rental by black caterers, while the members of the Philadelphia Caterers' Association banded together to compete with white businesses. Dutrieuille was also treasurer of the Pioneer Building and Loan Association and was involved in the Quaker City Beneficial Association. While savings and loans were relatively recent innovations, beneficial (or mutual aid) organizations that provided members with support in times of illness or death were as important a resource in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they were in the antebellum period.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Transcript drafts of family history, box 19, folder 1, 4/6/77 draft, pp. 10–13, 10/19/78, p. 25, and box 19, folder 2, p. 2 ("elite clientele" quotation), Bernice Dutrieuille Shelton Papers; Lane, *William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours*, 112–14, "Delmonico's" quotation in Lane, 112. Lane treated the monetary values given with skepticism, noting that it is difficult to translate nineteenth century prices, wages, and wealth into equivalent modern-day terms. Lane, 61–62.

<sup>44</sup> White, *Who's Who in Philadelphia*, 49–50; *Laws of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1895* ([Harrisburg, PA?], 1895), a137; Vicki Howard, *Brides, Inc.: American Weddings and the Business of Tradition* (Philadelphia, 2006), 189; Lane, *William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours*, 112–13; Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 130, 155, 157.



As members of Philadelphia's black elite, families like the Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles distinguished themselves from the majority of black Philadelphians not only through the standard markers of status but also through family history, especially generational connections to Philadelphia. Philadelphia's late nineteenth-century black elite was made up of three groups, most of whose families were "Old Philadelphians" who had lived in the city since at least the first half of the nineteenth century: long-established natives like the Fortens; families from the French Caribbean, like the Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles; and those from points south like the Mintons. According to historian Willard Gatewood, by placing greater emphasis on "birth and inheritance than . . . training," families like the "Fortens, Bustills, Mintons . . . secure in their lofty status, engaged in numerous efforts to 'uplift' the masses and to advance the cause of civil rights for blacks, but they and their social life remained far removed from 'ordinary Negroes.'" The Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles seem to fit Gatewood's description equally well.<sup>45</sup>

This range of social, economic, and community activity illustrates that while religion may have distinguished these families, it did not isolate them. In the late eighteenth century, language and religion separated refugees from the French Caribbean from the majority of black Philadelphians and newcomers from the South. In the late nineteenth century, however, it was social and economic success, and the cachet of being an "Old Philadelphian," that separated a small number of second- and third-generation Saint-Dominguans from the majority of blacks, including fellow Saint-Dominguans.

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In 1913, Henry Minton, a medical doctor and descendant of one of black Philadelphia's founding families, gave a talk on the "Early History of Negroes in Business in Philadelphia" to the American Negro Historical Society. Minton noted that many French Caribbean business owners would have been familiar to his audience. While Minton was speaking to a well-informed group, his references also indicate the long-lived influence that some migrants from the French Caribbean exerted on black Philadelphia.

<sup>45</sup> Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), 9-11, 97, 101. See also Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color," 117-18.

A number of patterns can be noted among these migrants during the first half of the nineteenth century. Religion was important to a significant minority and seemed to have served as a marker of cultural identity, as seen through marriage. A small number of black Saint-Dominguan families found a measure of socioeconomic success in Philadelphia as the nineteenth century progressed; a handful made their way into the city's "black elite." A few of these migrants also took leadership roles in cultural institutions and became politically active in Philadelphia-based abolitionist and moral reform efforts.

By the 1850s and 1860s, greater numbers of black Saint-Dominguans and, more significantly, their children and grandchildren were assimilating into the larger African American community. But again, such assimilation must be understood as embodying a range of responses to mainstream culture. Individual reactions to life in Philadelphia were shaped by family and economic concerns and by the relative importance of language, culture, or, more frequently, religion. Families like the Augustins, Baptistes, and Dutrieuilles, related to one another by marriage in the second half of the century, retained some elements of their French Caribbean cultural heritage. But they were also an integral part of African American social and economic networks and of the African American elite.

With the process of assimilation often taking a couple of generations, families from the French Caribbean gradually became part of larger African American communities in Philadelphia by the second half of the nineteenth century. This was true even for those who continued to worship as Roman Catholics, maintained their French names, and spoke French in their homes. Aware of the changing nature of social and economic networks in the nineteenth century, these families expanded and extended connections of kinship, work, and culture over the course of the 1800s.