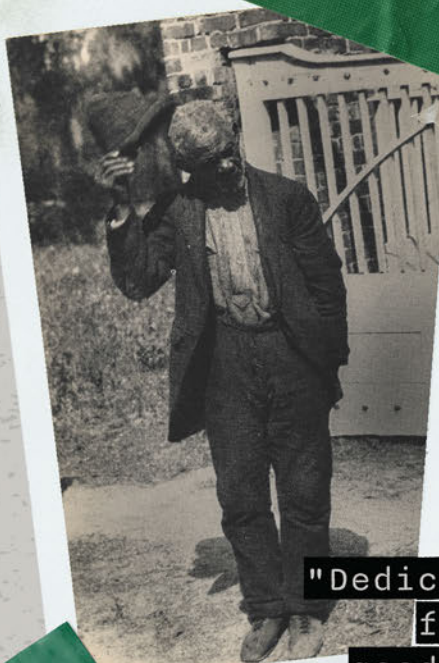


THE GOOD DARKY

DEDICATED TO THE GOOD ONES



"Dedicated to the arduous and
faithful services of the
good darkies of Louisiana."

-Statue's Original Plaque

Cover Images: (Left) The Gatekeeper - National Geographic; May 1926 (Right) The Good Ducky statue - Jason Church, NCPTT

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INTRODUCTION

With his head and eyes lowered to the ground, hat in hand, "The Good Darky" statue was a perfect example of what a "good" slave looked like in the 1800s. The statue was a constant reminder to the Black citizens of Natchitoches, Louisiana on how they should behave as they navigated through a post-reconstructed world that was hostile towards them.



Key

- PLACES OF INTEREST
1. Santa Clara House
 2. Place de Lis Bonaparte
 3. Prothonotary House
 4. Prothonotary House
 5. Spill Store
 6. Camus Cook (Ella)
 7. Canal Ducky Statue
 8. Chamber of Commerce
 9. Levee-Canal House
 10. Chamber of Commerce
 11. Taylor House
 12. Taylor House
 13. Chaplin-Dunckinson
 14. Toulmin-Lory House
 15. Bettie Hubbard Youth Center
 16. Shopping Center
 17. Broadview Shopping Center
 18. St. Clair Plantation
 19. Teacher's Home
 20. Williams House
- CHURCHES AND STUDIOS
1. First Methodist Church
 2. Trinity Episcopal Church
 3. First Baptist Church
 4. Church of the Immaculate Conception
 5. Baptist Student Center
 6. Newman Center
 7. Church of the Holy Spirit
 8. St. Anthony's Catholic Church
 9. Congregational Church
 10. Albany Methodist Church
 11. First Presbyterian Church
 12. Christ the King Lutheran Church
 13. Holy Light Baptist Church
 14. Trinity Baptist Church
 15. Wesley Foundation
 16. Episcopal Student Center
 17. College Avenue Methodist Church
 18. First Baptist on Avenue
 19. Church of Christ
 20. Good Will Baptist Church
 21. Friendship Baptist Church
 22. Calvary Baptist Church
 23. United Methodist Church
 24. First State Baptist Church
 25. Church of Christ
 26. Grand Core Baptist Church
 27. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
 28. First Baptist Church on North 5
 29. St. Paul Baptist Church
 30. Natchitoches Baptist Mission

OLD NATCHITOCHEES PARISH AND MERCANTILE MAGAZINE ADVERTISER

1.00

No. 96

HISTORY, HUMOR, CULTURE & TALL TALES OF OLD LOUISIANA

The Good Darky Statue

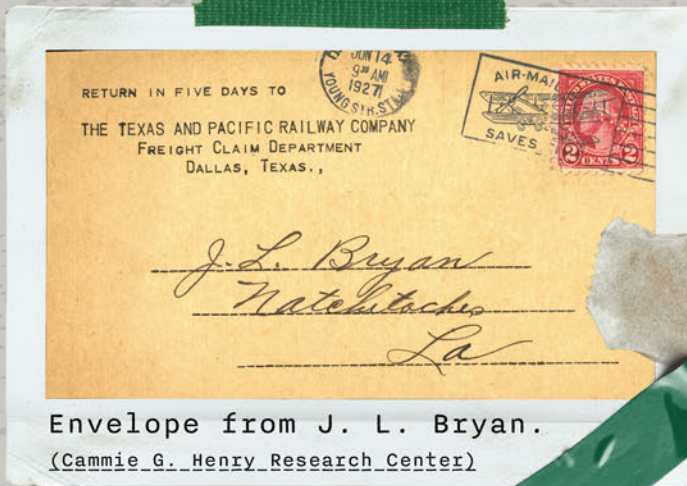
The first statue of a black man in the United States caused quite a stir. This is 'Uncle Jack's' story

(Old Natchitoches Parish Magazine)

DURING THE FESTIVAL FIREWORKS, parking on the lakefront is by permission of the Riverbank Parking Permit chairman. Large parking areas are available at the Broadmoor Shopping Center and on the Northwestern State College campus at the Coliseum and the Demon Stadium. For information on other parking areas, consult any peace officer.

For forty-one years, the meek and elderly man stood humbly at the corner of Front and Washington Street in the tiny town. From the day of its unveiling, "The Good Darky", nicknamed "Uncle Jack" by Natchitoches residents after the man who commissioned the statue, had a constant shadow of controversy following close behind it. There are strong opinions on whether or not a statue like the "Good Darky" should exist and if the reason behind its creation is valid. For us to understand any creation, we must look to its creator. To understand "Uncle Jack," we must look to the man who envisioned him: Jackson Lee Bryan.

JACKSON LEE BRYAN



Envelope from J. L. Bryan.
(Cammie G. Henry Research Center)

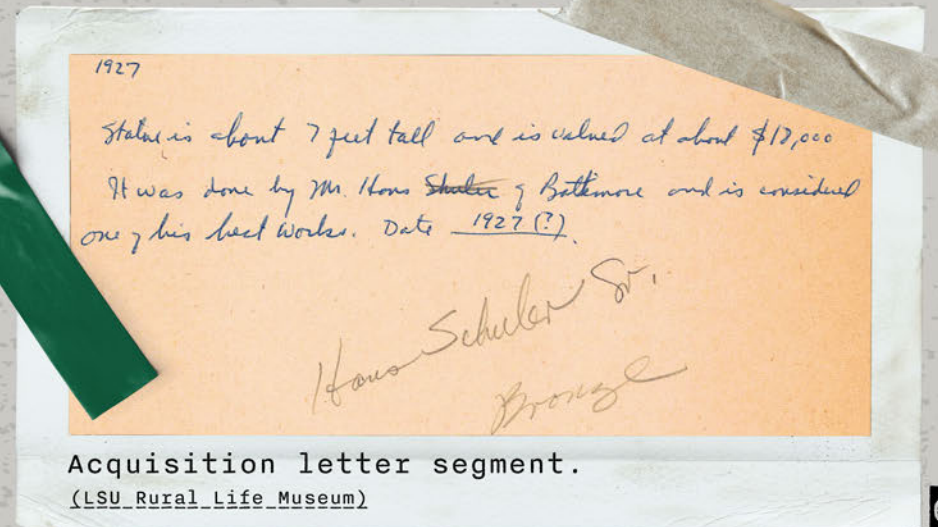
Jackson Lee Bryan, the son of a slave owner, was a wealthy white banker and cotton planter from Natchitoches. During Bryan's childhood, he became friends with the young Black boys on his father's plantation. As he began to work for himself, he "came to rely largely on Negro help in the work on his plantation and ... his oil mill in the city of Natchitoches." According to the same article written by the Natchitoches Enterprise, Bryan "felt [that] he owed a debt of gratitude" to the Black people who had served him all his life ("Bronze Statue to Negro Slaves"). He admired their strong work ethic and decided to honor the enslaved with a statue. Bryan commissioned world-renowned Baltimore sculptor Hans Schuler to create the larger-than-life-sized statue for \$4,300.

There is no record of Schuler's thoughts as he worked on the statue, but according to a letter between Bryan and his brother, Joe, the price that Schuler and Bryan agreed upon was half the cost of his usual commissions. Schuler cut the statue fee under the contingency that he would retain the rights to the Uncle Jack design so that it could be reused for future projects (Bryan, 1926). However, these future projects never came to fruition.

HANS SCULER



Name on the statue base.
(NCPIT; Jason Church)



Acquisition letter segment.
(LSU Rural Life Museum)



(Jeff Neale, Middleton Place;
Beyond the Fields: Slavery at Middleton Place by Barbara Doyle)

It is speculated, Schuler modeled "The Good Darcy" statue after a photograph taken for the May 1926 edition of National Geographic. The man shown in the photo is a groundskeeper from Middleton Place in Charleston, South Carolina. To this day, the identity of the man is unknown. Nonetheless, the name "Ansel Horlbeck" is postulated (Daughtery, 2019, p. 632).

ANSEL HORLBECK

Ansel Horlbeck (sometimes referred to as Ansel Holbrook) was hired by Middleton Place in the late 1800s and by 1902, he was in charge of the place's grounds. It is believed that he lived at the Middleton Place up until 1928 with his wife. Jeff Neale, Curator of Research and Collections at Middleton, theorizes that he is not likely to be the inspiration of the statue after comparing Horlbeck's "build, posture, facial hair, and clothing" to the unknown man behind the statue (2024).



(Jeff Neale, Middleton
Place; Beyond the Fields
by Barbara Doyle)

GET CREATIVE

Statues are a way to show honor. To remember the individuals who came before us and left an impact on history. To memorialize someone by turning them into art is one of society's ways to show the upmost respect to the people who have dedicated themselves to an important cause.



Think of someone who has done a lot for a community that hasn't received much recognition for their cause. Draw a symbol that best represents what you believe this person stands for and write a sentence that sums up what it is they support/advocate for!

#HONORYOURHISTORY



Post your creation on social media and don't forget to tag us!

@ncptt.nps

ARRIVING IN NATCHITOCHES

On May 2, 1927, the Uncle Jack statue was shipped to Natchitoches from Baltimore, MD through the Texas and Pacific Railway Company. On May 24, 1927, twenty-two days later, Uncle Jack was revealed to the public. Even though the statue's inscription states that the city erected Uncle Jack, John H. Kyser, who was mayor at the time, "nobly and properly refused to "officiate" or 'dedicate' what he believed to be a "foolish and cheaply vain gift to the city in times of low cotton, high water, and general distress'" (Handley, 2013, p.7).



Natchitoches Postcard of Uncle Jack - back of postcard.

(LSU Rural Life Museum; Bob Hawthorne)



Louisiana Postcard picturing the Good Darky, located in vintage shop.

(NCPTT; Jason Church)

THE PEOPLE'S REVIEW

Little to nothing is recorded on what the Black citizens of Natchitoches thought about the statue. However, specific individuals did reach out to Jackson Lee Bryan to express their opinions. One White veteran by the name of M.H. Ackard did not see the point of erecting a statue to an "old dead n*****" and believed that Bryan's dedication was "an insult to the true Confederate veteran" (1927). On the flip side, some Black individuals felt that Bryan's statue was a step in the right direction to a post-racial society. On January 5, 1927, Rev. P. Colfax Rameau, PhD from Birmingham, Alabama wrote a letter to Bryan commending him for being one of the few "southern white men with moral courage [to] take a stand for those old men and women who out of their devotion and love ... put their lives on the altar for ... whom they and their children had served for more than two hundred fifty years" (1927). It is not hard to believe that this statement was not a popular sentiment held during the statue's time in downtown Natchitoches.



... a few acts of "soaping" the statue were carried out by whites, according to police reports.

(Alexandria Daily Town Talk, 1972)



... several national black orgs which did not like the idea of a Negro statue being a main part of a southern city's history.

(Alexandria Daily Town Talk, 1972)

APRIL 13, 1961

Front page editorial rebukes *Ebony* magazine for assailing the Good Darkey statue standing at the head of Front Street.

(Natchitoches Times, 1961)

A BRONZE statue of an old negro, heroic in size, and appealingly life-like, was recently erected in Natchitoches, La. The pedestal, about eight feet high, has upon its side a bronze tablet, with this inscription:

ERECTED BY THE
CITY OF NATCHITOCHEs
IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION
OF THE ARDUOUS AND FAITHFUL
SERVICE OF THE GOOD
DARKIES OF LOUISIANA

DONATED BY
J. L. BRYAN

1927

This unusual statue is in the centre of a public square on the bank of Cane River. It faces south, toward the main street of the little city; at the left, a few yards away, is the historic stream with an old steamboat landing; at the right, at an equal distance, is the Jefferson Highway, the great road from Winnipeg to New Orleans.

The old negro looks as if he had just shuffled into the square and recognized some of his white folks;

he has removed his battered hat and is bowing and smiling his joyous greeting. His kindly, wrinkled features, gnarled hands and big feet show him a genuine type. He seems ready to tell an Uncle Remus story to any of the wondering white children who come to play in the grass near by..

The Cane was the Red River until about the time of the Civil War, when a flood came and the Red broke over into Bayou le Bon Dieu and made for itself a new channel six miles east of the town. The rich Cane River country was a region of great cotton plantations, teeming with life and industry. In the old days steamboats piled between Natchitoches and New Orleans and served the hospitable, easy-going planter whose homes were among the lilies near the river. Relations between the town and the country always been very pleasant. Not only in slavery but to the present. Many in the parish have served by the old and "aunties," and remains on each



... many local citizens have quietly hoped that someday the statue... could be returned to its former spot.

(Alexandria Daily Town Talk, 1972)

★ The question concerning bringing the "Uncle Tom" statue back to Natchitoches was brought up and Welch said there had been lengthy conversations in the black community about this. He said some feel it should be brought back, some are against it and some can be persuaded.

Welch said emphatically that if the bronze statue that was erected on Front Street in the early 1930's by Mrs. Jo Ducou-nau's father in honor of the black rural farm worker and taken down in the late 1960s because of integration problems is brought back, it will be known as the "Uncle Tom" statue and not the "Good Darcy."

(Natchitoches Times, 1993)



ONLINE COMMENTS



Bound with ropes, "Uncle Jack" prepares to leave the area at the head of Front Street, where he has stood for 41 years. (Old Natchitoches Parish Magazine)

Throughout the statue's forty-one years as a functioning memorial, it became a target of vandalism. Scholars theorized that Ku Klux Klan members or disgruntled Black citizens were behind the attacks. (Aaron, n.d., p. 6). These incidents increased racial tensions amongst the Black and White citizens of Natchitoches and led to the city's ultimate decision to secretly take down the statue in the middle of the night.

THE TAKEDOWN

According to the Old Natchitoches Parish Magazine (n.d.), on September 26, 1968, Oscar Delrie Jr. was instructed to bring a flatbed truck and some extra men to Front St. around four in the morning. When he inquired about this seemingly odd request, he was given no further information. When he arrived, Jackson Lee Bryan's daughter, Jo Bryan Ducournau, and her husband stated they wanted the statue to stay where it was. Despite their pleas, Uncle Jack was taken down and temporarily relocated to the Natchitoches airport (Delrie Jr. as cited by Aaron, n.d., p. 34). Once taken down, Jo Bryan Ducournau spent time researching Uncle Jack's future home. After spending some time at the Natchitoches Airport and Jo Bryan's family farm, she ultimately chose the Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum where Uncle Jack currently resides today. It was relocated to the museum in 1975.

Mrs. Jo Bryan Ducournau, the owner of the "Uncle Jack" statue, told the TIMES Friday that she has loaned the statue to the Burden Research Museum in Baton Rouge. She said the statue is now place and announcement that it is on public display will be made soon.

Mrs. Ducournau said she had tried for four years to get Natchitoches to take the statue back and was told it was a "dead issue." She stated, "During this time, I refused to let eight individuals and museums, some from out of state, have the statue. I would have liked to have the statue in Natchitoches. My father wanted it in Natchitoches."

"But the statue is too beautiful a thing to stay in a wooden box at the airport, so when these people came to me on their own accord, I loaned them the statue after three or four weeks of negotiations

"This whole thing is confusing to me," she continued. "The blacks complain they have no history in the history books, yet they reject this piece of history that is Natchitoches history too."

"I have had four years of it," she said, "and now the statue is in a very happy situation. As it stands now, I own it .. I can recall it ... but I have done my dish with it, so to speak."

(Natchitoches Times)

Fifty - six years later, the validity of the Uncle Jack statue and others like it are still being called into question. Some believe these memorials no longer serve their purpose. Others feel that they should have never been created and need to be destroyed, while some believe that the statues simply need more context. Whether we like it or not, Uncle Jack is a part of our history and provides insight into how some people viewed slavery as an act of loyalty and not for what it was—an act of survival. Most slaves were not "loyal" to their masters because they loved and respected them, they were loyal and obedient because the only other option was death. Uncle Jack can still serve a purpose today in Modern America, just not in the way that Mr. J.L. Bryan intended. Instead, Uncle Jack can be used to educate individuals on the misconceptions that White Americans of the late 1800s and 1900s had about slavery and the stereotypes that were birthed from that era such as the "Uncle Tom" and "Mammy" trope and how Uncle Jack is a result of those beliefs. Destroying Uncle Jack destroys the possibility of learning from the past.

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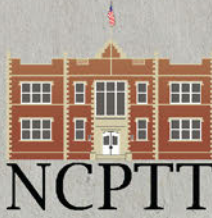
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(NCPTI; Jason Church)



"Good Darky" at LSU Rural Life Museum.



www.nps.gov/ncptt

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Special Thanks to..... Donna Baker (Northwestern
State University)
.....Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum

In Collaboration with.....
.....National Center for Preservation Technology
and Training
.....Cane River National Heritage Area, Inc.



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