



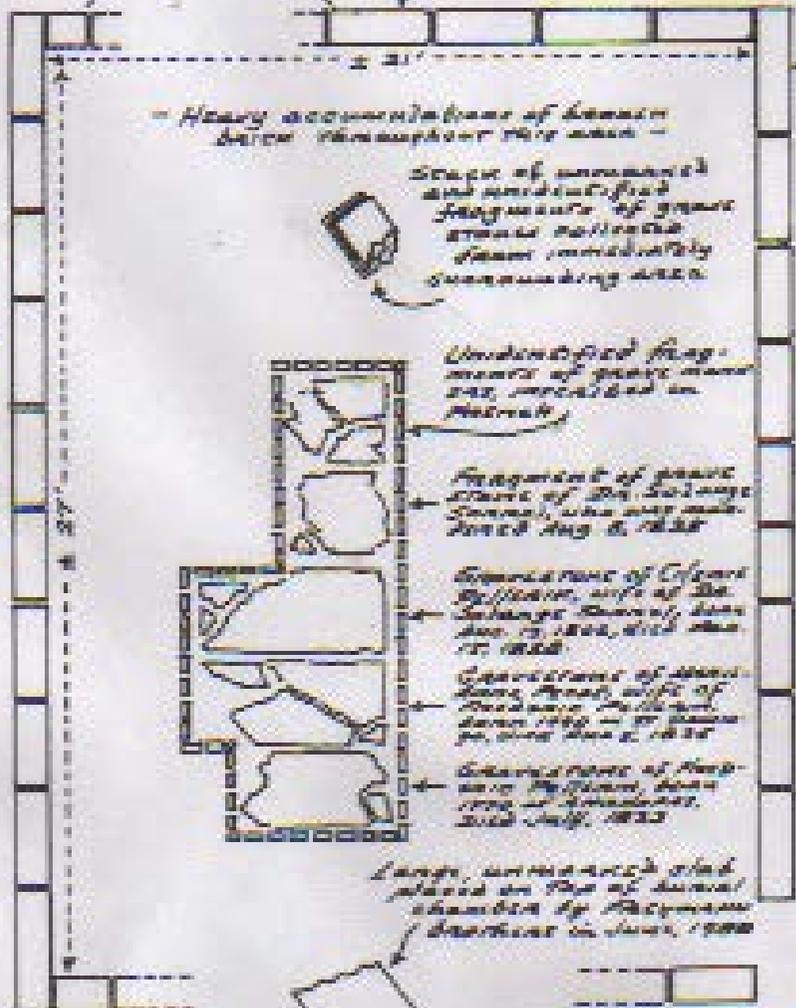
Sorrel/Pelloux Burial Plot - Detail -

Scale: 1 inch = 5 feet



Remains of what appears to have been a vaulted crypt or burial chamber

130' no diagonal traffic



Perimeter of Plot lined by cut blocks of granite. All but two of the iron fence posts that were originally set on the blocks are now missing.

Despite efforts to clean, the entire area shown here remains heavily overgrown with weeds, brush and trees. Much of the granite-block pavement is just to view beneath soil, broken rubble and turf.

Displaced section of granite perimeter

Large unmarked slab placed on top of burial chamber by Raymond Duffaut in June, 1933

Note: When discovered in December, 1932 all of the grave markers had been removed from their original positions within the granite perimeter and were thrown into the brush to the west and southwest. Some were partially or totally buried. The Raymond Duffauts retrieved them and placed them in their present locations in June, 1933. The bones of Eugene Duffaut surrounding the stones list was added at that time.

Remains of what appears to have been a vaulted crypt or burial chamber. Bones were laid immediately below the surface on floor (slab) edge. Also resting place of Jacques Joseph Sorrel and his infant cousin, Col. Antoine Sorrel, his RIF #11111111

130' no diagonal traffic along all edges and open fields

Figure 1

THE SORREL/PELLERIN BURIAL GROUND

by
Jarvis M. Freymann

The Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground is located on what was once the Jacques Sorrel Plantation in St. Mary Parish just south of Jeanerette, Louisiana. The acreage is now known as the "Mastika Plantation," and is rented by a local sugar cane grower named Jessie Dredoux.

Lamentably, the cemetery is now in a sad state of disrepair. Virtually all of the tombstones that remain are badly shattered, and a large amount of broken brick suggests that many other grave markers have long since disappeared. Judging by the weathering of the remaining fragments, the desecration of the burial ground took place more than a century ago. In all probability, the damage was done by Union forces during the War Between the States. In his study entitled *Yankee Autumn in Acadia*,¹ David C. Edmunds notes that, in the spring of 1863, Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks' army "swept through Sorrel's property with some fifteen thousand bluecoats, whose depots, garrisons, trains, detachments, transports and civil staff . . . lingered about until June. . . . They . . . helped themselves freely to everything from barnyard chickens to sugar in the sucrose. Fences [were] destroyed, livestock taken, the grounds trampled and damaged. . . ." In October of that same year, Maj. Gen. Franklin's 15th Army Corps and General George F. McGinnis's 13th Army Corps also paid a visit to the Sorrel Plantation and left devastation in their wakes.

In June, 1988, Dr. John Gordon Freymann, Dr. Moya Wicks Freymann and Jarvis M. Freymann—great, great, great grandsons of one of the early settlers interred in the cemetery—partially cleared the site and attempted to restore some semblance of order to the disordered scene. The simple truth, however, is that little remains of what once must have been a handsome place of rest. The burial ground has now become little more than a jungle of roots, weeds and broken brick and stone, and it is not likely that it will survive much longer unless some effort is made to properly mark and protect it.

Although there is no exact record of when the Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground first came into being, it seems reasonable to assume that it was established upon the death of Jacques Joseph Sorrel—the original founder of the plantation—in June, 1816. As will be shown below, it is known that Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivieres was interred beside his distant cousin Jacques Joseph Sorrel in May, 1830. Gravestones at the site indicate that the burial ground continued to be used at least as late as 1835. The lack of any evidence of repairs having been made following the damage done during the Civil War strongly suggests that the cemetery has not been used since the middle of the last century, or perhaps even earlier.

Burials Known to Have Taken Place in the Cemetery

Although no grave markers for Jacques Joseph Sorrel or for Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivieres have been found, there can be no doubt that they were buried in this place. As will be seen from the obituary, published in the *Attakapas Gazette*, of May 15, 1830, Col. Antoine Sorrel died at the

¹David C. Edmunds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadia: A Narrative of the Great Texas-Creole Expedition Through Southeastern Louisiana, October-December 1863* (Lakeville, Louisiana, 1979), pp. 51-52.

home of Frederick Pellerin (then the owner of what had been the Jacques Joseph Sorrel Plantation) on May 9, 1830. In a letter² of June 3, 1830, Jacques Joseph Sorrel's nephew and heir, Martial Sorrel, wrote Antoine's son Francis, then a merchant in Savannah, to inform him of Antoine's death:

I am about to give you sad news, but for which you must have been in hourly expectation. Your father is no more. He was taken from us on the 9th of May at three o'clock in the morning in the 53rd year of his age after displaying to his last moments a composure and resignation truly heroic. . . . My brother (Antoine Sorrel 'le Jeune') and I, who loved him as a father and revered him as a being on earth the living image of the goodness of Heaven, have deeply felt his loss. His coffin, deposited by the side of our uncle (Jacques Joseph Sorrel), was bedewed with our most sincere tears. . . .

In a letter dated July 25, 1892, J. Sully Martel, a prominent attorney of Franklin, Louisiana, informed Antoine's grandson, Dr. Louis François Mathurin Sorrel, Jr., that his grandfather, Col. Antoine Sorrel, "died in 1830, at the age of 98 (*sic*) years and is buried in the old Family Grave-Yard, on the Pellerin Plantation, now owned by Millard Bosworth." As is clearly shown on a map dated 1893 displayed in the courthouse in Franklin, this Bosworth property and the former Jacques Joseph Sorrel property were one and the same.

Four other persons known to have been buried in the Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground (evidenced by their tombstones) were:

1. *Frederic Pellerin*, son of Gregoire Pellerin, who was born in the Attakapas District in 1770, married on July 23, 1805, to Marie-Anne Pecot, and died at his home (the former Jacques Joseph Sorrel Plantation) on July 1, 1833.

2. *Marie-Anne Pecot Pellerin*, daughter of Rosalie Prejean Pecot and François Pecot, who was born on the island of Santo Domingo, circa 1790, married Frederic Pellerin on July 23, 1805, and died on August 5, 1835.

3. *Cecile Rosalie Cilenie Pellerin Sorrel*, daughter of Frederic Pellerin and Marie-Anne Pecot, who was born in the Attakapas on August 13, 1806, married to Dr. Solange Sorrel on October 10, 1820, and died on March 15, 1828.

4. *Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel*, son of Antoine Sorrel "le Jeune" (and nephew of Jacques Joseph Sorrel), who was born in France and first came to America sometime between 1816 and 1820, married Cecile Rosalie Cilenie Pellerin on October 10, 1820, and was murdered "at the hands of Negroes of an adjoining plantation" (for which "five of them dropped from the gallows") on August 8, 1835.

Historical and Genealogical Notes

The relationship between Jacques Joseph Sorrel and his distant cousin, Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières, is best stated by saying that Jacques Joseph Sorrel's grandfather Claude Sorrel (born on May 3, 1646 at Pollianas, a small village some 10 miles west-northwest of Grenoble, France) and Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières' great grandfather Pierre Sorrel (born on January 5,

² The original letter was lost during the last century. This appears to be a somewhat imperfect translation from the original French.

1648 at Poléras) were brothers. Although Jacques Joseph Sorrel was born at l'Albence, a village immediately southwest of Poléras, and Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières was born at Grenoble, 10 miles away, it is more than likely that they knew one another in childhood and shared common memories. These ties would bring them together again later in life—and in death.

Jacques Joseph Sorrel, the son of Claude François Sorrel, was born at l'Albence on January 7, 1742. Little is known of his early life, but family tradition (supported by J. Sully Martel's account) suggests that Jacques Joseph had a "misalliance" with a peasant girl in France which ultimately led to his being disinherited. He subsequently came to America to seek his fortune, and first appears in the records of Attakapas District in 1758,³ when he was sixteen years old.

It should be mentioned here that, in an article entitled "Fortune and Misfortune: The Sorrel Family in Louisiana, 1763-1900" published in the *Attakapas Gazette* in 1987, Gertrude C. Taylor speculated that Jacques Joseph Sorrel might have come to Louisiana as a French military officer in 1762 and settled in the Attakapas the following year. No military records exist to support this thesis, and the registration of Jacques Joseph Sorrel's cattle brand in 1758 appears to offer conclusive proof of his having arrived in the area at an earlier date. It is true, however, that Jacques Joseph did serve as an officer in the Attakapas Militia during the period of Spanish control in Louisiana (1762-1803). The *Records of Attakapas District* compiled by Mary Elizabeth Sanders show "Don Santiago Sorrel" (elsewhere identified as Jacques Joseph Sorrel) listed as a militia lieutenant as early as February 22, 1776, and the *S.A.R. Spanish Records: Spanish-English War 1779-1783*, indicate that Jacques Joseph Sorrel was among the patriots listed on the roster of "La Compagnie de Milice des Attakapas" on May 1, 1777. Sorrel is believed to have participated in Galvez's attacks on the British at Baton Rouge, Mobile, and Pensacola in 1779, 1780 and 1781, and his name appears among the officers of the Attakapas Company, Militia of Attakapas, in 1782. His name—"L. Dn. Joseph Sorrel"—continued to be listed in the general census of the militia in 1792, and in 1799 he was captain and interim commandant of the Attakapas Post. Although his military service was performed under another flag, there can be no doubt that Jacques Joseph Sorrel was an active participant in what has now come to be called the American Revolutionary War, and it would seem fitting to provide some marker to this effect at his burial site.

Sometime after his arrival in the Attakapas, Jacques Joseph Sorrel became closely associated with Gregoire Pellerin, another rancher and farmer who had come to Louisiana from Acadia. Gregoire's plantation adjoined Sorrel's, and when Gregoire died in 1776, Jacques Joseph—a bachelor—became a trusted counselor to his former partner's widow, Cecile Prejean Pellerin, and a surrogate father and mentor to her four young children Eugénie, Emélie, Frédéric and Marie Joseph.

Jacques Joseph Sorrel eventually became one of the Attakapas District's⁴ largest landowners; according to Gertrude C. Taylor, "when titles were certified in 1811, he owned more than 4,000 acres of land, stretching from the west bank of Bayou Teche southward over the prairie and along the ridges on either side of Bayou Cypremont almost to its mouth in West Cote

³ "Brand Book for Opelousas and Attakapas District, Louisiana, 1759-1811" cited in Mary Elizabeth Sanders, *Records of Attakapas District, Louisiana, 1759-1811*, (1982). These records show that a cattle brand was first registered under Joseph Sorrel's name in 1758.

⁴ As noted by Mary Elizabeth Sanders, the Attakapas District originally included "the present parishes of St. Martin, St. Mary, Lafayette, Vermilion and Iberia. Prior to 1789 the population consisted of only a few Indians, trappers, traders, and ranch owners."

on July 1st, 1833. There were three children by this marriage: Charles Frederick Pellerin (of whom nothing further is heard); Cecile Rosalie Clénie Pellerin (b. August 13, 1805; m. Oct. 10, 1820 to Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel (a son of Jacques Joseph Sorrel's brother, Antoine Sorrel "le Jeune"; d. March 15, 1828); and Marie Rose Angelique Desirée Coralle Pellerin (m. February 6, 1834 to Martial Sorrel (another son of Antoine Sorrel "le Jeune"); d. May 18, 1842 in France.

It was this same Frédéric Pellerin whom Jacques Joseph Sorrel sent to Havana to summon his distant cousin, Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières, in late 1804 or early 1805. He, his wife Marie-Anne Pécot Pellerin, and his daughter (Cecile Rosalie Clénie Pellerin) and son-in-law (Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel) lie buried near Jacques Joseph Sorrel and Col. Sorrel in the Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground.

Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel, was born in France on August 22, 1793, completed his training in medicine in France, and came to America sometime between 1816 and 1820. He married Frédéric Pellerin's daughter Cecile Rosalie Clénie Pellerin at St. Martin's Church on October 10, 1820. The story of his violent and untimely death on August 8, 1835, is told in Gertrude C. Taylor's article ("Fortune and Misfortune: The Sorrel Family in Louisiana") cited earlier.

A New Orleans newspaper (the *New Orleans Bee*, August 19, 1834) carried this first account:

"Mr. Solange (Sorrel), a respectable sugar planter in the Attakapas, when returning a few days since from a visit to a neighbor, and passing a bridge on Bayou Teche, had the contents of a gun lodged in his body. Although he did not die immediately, it is feared that he is mortally wounded . . ."

The next day the same paper carried a more complete and probably more accurate account:

"On Saturday last, at about 9 o'clock p.m., Dr. Solanges (*sic*), who had passed the evening with his brother Martial Solanges, while he was returning home and as he reached the limits of his plantation, received the contents of a gun almost within striking distance.

Although he was shot through and through with five slugs or pieces of cut lead, the unfortunate man had strength enough to crawl on his knees a few yards and to utter piercing cries. A female servant, recognizing the voice of her master, called the overseer and the driver who started immediately to his relief and found him expiring.

Dr. Solanges died within an hour and a quarter after being shot; he had not been able to distinguish or recognize anyone and thought that he had been struck by lightning. He knew not that he had a mortal enemy and pardoned his assassin.

A reward of \$2,000, it is said, has been offered to any free person, and \$1,000 and freedom to any slave who will discover the author of this crime."

The only record of the solution of this crime lies in the memoirs of Francis D. Richardson: "Dr. Sorrel met an untimely death at the hands of Negroes from an adjoining plantation, for which five of them dropped from the gallows. . ."

Blanche Bay." When Cecilia Prejean Pellerin died on January 7, 1808, her children came to lean even more heavily upon their father's old partner, and it is not surprising that when Jacques Joseph Somel suddenly died "at the Chitamaches Indians" (at Indian Bend, now Charenton) on June 11, 1816, the Pellerin children figured prominently in his "succession." Although no copy of the will has been found, the ultimate primary beneficiary appears to have been Gregoire and Cecilia Prejean Pellerin's son Frédéric. More will be said about him her later.

Col. Antoine Somel des Rivières, the son of Antoine Somel, was born at Grenoble, France, on September 6, 1737. He matriculated at the School of Engineers at Grenoble in 1754, and three years later was appointed *aide-de-camp* to the Comte de Balleron, second in command of the army of the Duc d'Anguillon on the Brittany coast. Following service in the 1757, 1758 and 1761 campaigns of the Seven Years' War, he received a brevet as Geographical Engineer, and on May 1, 1763 was commissioned Lieutenant of Infantry and sent to map the island of Santo Domingo (Haïti). Appointed Engineer of the Fortress of Santo Domingo in 1768, Somel was commissioned Captain of Infantry in the Colonies by Louis XV on July 29, 1771. In 1780 he was appointed Engineer-in-Chief of the Department of the West in Santo Domingo, and on September 30, 1788 he was made a Chevalier of the Military Order of Saint Louis. He was promoted to Major in 1788, and in 1803 became Colonel of Engineers and Director of Fortifications and of the Topographical Bureau of the Army of the West. In addition to his important work as a cartographer during his four decades in Haïti, Somel is also said to have been instrumental in supplying the capital, Port au Prince, with an abundant water system and other vital improvements.

Col. Somel's first wife was a Mile. de Bellechasse, by whom he had a daughter and a son. His second wife, whom he married in the year 1792, was Eugénie de Sutré. By this marriage there was one son, François Mathurin Somel, born on May 4, 1793, at Miragoâne, Parish of Petit Goâve, Santo Domingo. This child—the Freymann brothers' great, great grandfather—was to live a long and productive life of 77 years; his mother survived only 49 more days, dying on June 23, 1793.

Those were stormy times in Santo Domingo. Beginning in 1791, the island became the scene of a bloody insurrection, culminating in the expulsion of the French military forces a little over a decade later. In the midst of this turmoil, Col. Somel's plantation was destroyed and he became separated from his young son, who found refuge with family friends and relatives in Port au Prince. Following the capitulation of the French military forces at the end of 1803, Col. Somel, having lost his home and fortune, was forced to seek refuge in Cuba. When Jacques Joseph Somel learned of the plight of his relative, he immediately sent his young friend Frédéric Pellerin, the son of his former partner Gregoire Pellerin, to bring Col. Somel from Havana to live with him on the plantation in Attakapas. According to J. Sully Martel's account, Jacques Joseph Somel not only offered his kinsman his hospitality, but also "made him *une Rente*," gave him a negro servant named Raymond, and always gave him the kindest of care." Following Jacques Joseph Somel's death, the same kindnesses continued to be offered to the old colonel by Jacques Joseph's protégé and heir, Frédéric Pellerin. Col. Somel is believed to have first arrived at the plantation in Attakapas in late 1804 or early 1805; when he died on May 9, 1830, he had been in residence for more than a quarter of a century. Having been treated as a brother by Jacques Joseph Somel and having been looked upon as almost a father by the Pellerin children following Jacques Joseph's death, it is not surprising that "his coffin, deposited by the side of (their) uncle, was bedewed with (their) most sincere tears."

Frédéric Pellerin, the son of Gregoire and Cecilia Prejean Pellerin, was born—as noted above—in the Attakapas District in 1770, married on July 23, 1805 to Maria-Anne Recot, and died

Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel and his wife, Clénie, had only one child, Emilie Ernestine Sorrel, who died young. It seems likely that this child may also have been interred in the Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground, but no gravestone has been found.

Although neither he nor his wife appear to have been interred in the family's cemetery, it might be useful to say a word here about Dr. Antoine François Solange Sorrel's brother, Martial. *Martial Sorrel*, another son of Jacques Joseph Sorrel's brother Antoine Sorrel "le Jeune," was born at Chantresse—a village between Poliénas and l'Albence, France—on November 28, 1794. Before coming to America, he studied law and became an "Advocat à la Cour Royale" in Paris. He was married at St. Martin Church on February 6, 1834, to Marie Rose Angélique Désirée Coralie Pellerin, the sister of Dr. Solange Sorrel's wife Clénie. It was this Martial Sorrel who wrote the letter informing Francis Sorrel of the death of his father, Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières in 1830. When his brother Solange was murdered in 1835—leaving neither wife nor children—Martial became the sole heir to his estate. During the later years of his life, Martial Sorrel appears to have spent a considerable amount of time abroad. Before her death in France on May 18, 1842, his wife bore him three children: Amanda Emilie Sorrel, Almée Zélda Solange Sorrel, and Solange Aruns Sorrel, all of whom were educated in France. By the time he died, on November 24, 1867, Martial Sorrel was residing at his plantation home near Charonton, and he is presumably buried there.

The Rediscovery of the Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground

The Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Ground (which appears in no local maps or other records) was "rediscovered" in December, 1987, by John Gordon Freymann and his wife Ruth. With the help of some of the early materials presented in this report, a map, and Mr. Clarence Rhine (operator of the drawbridge across Bayou Teche on Sorrel Bridge Road), they were successful both in establishing the location of the cemetery and in uncovering the four inscribed tombstones that remain on the site.

Six months later, in June, 1988, the three Freymann brothers returned to Louisiana to conduct further explorations. With the active support and encouragement of Virginia Kyle Hine, Jessie Breaux, Glenn Kramer and the St. Mary Chapter, Louisiana Landmarks Society, they were able to clear the area of a considerable overgrowth of brush, weeds and roots, and to find several more illegible or unmarked gravestone fragments. Before leaving, they returned the four identifiable tombstones—which had been scattered far and wide and buried beneath brush and turf well outside of the original burial lot—to a more orderly arrangement within the central precinct defined by cut granite blocks. (See Figure 1: Sorrel/Pellerin Burial Plot: Detail.)

It will be noted in Figure 1 that there was once a rather large (vaulted?) crypt or burial chamber extending from the southern end of the Burial Ground, and another smaller extension on the northern side. A small probe of the southernmost end of the larger crypt revealed a solid tier of brickwork hidden beneath perhaps a foot of turf and soil. Because of the size and prominent position of this mound, it seems likely that this may have been the site of Jacques Joseph Sorrel's and Col. Antoine Sorrel des Rivières' interment. To mark the spot, the Freymann brothers placed a large, unmarked tomb cover on the mound, together with one of the two remaining iron fence posts that formerly were set into the bordering cut granite blocks.