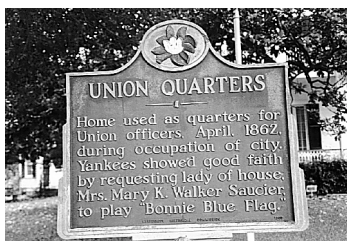


History of Union Quarters -- Pass Christian

During the Civil War, following the occupation by Federal Troops, the home at 243 East Beach was temporarily used as Union Quarters until they moved to Biloxi.



The superbly restored mansion is architecturally described in the National Register of Historic Places as having been built in 1855. It is an impressive, two-story, frame, double-pile, Greek Revival dwelling distinguished by its one-bay pedimented portico which is set against the inset gallery. It is adorned with a cast-iron filigree balustrade. The octagonal garconniere at its west side was built in 1890, and the dining room, solarium, and porte-cochere were added in 1910.

A cast iron fence fronts the property enclosing a Magnolia Historical Marker which was dedicated in 1960. It reads, "*Union officers were temporarily quartered here during the invasion of Pass Christian.*"

Adjoining the *Union Quarters* on the west side is an aging story-and-a-half, four-bay frame cottage which was built by Pierre Saucier. It was last occupied by Mrs. Belle Christovich who died in 1969 at age 97.

Background

Pierre Saucier, Sr. and Ramon Lizana were brothers-in-law who derived their initial inheritance from Philip Saucier in the DeLisle area. They were in close contact with Charles Asnard, the freed Negro slave of the Widow Asmar. The brothers-in-law observed the escalating interest taking place at the Pass Christian channel which flowed past the shore near what is now Market Street. In 1827, steamboat service between New Orleans and Mobile effected even greater traffic. Upon Charles Asnard's death in 1835, Ramon Lizana was named Executor for Asnard's Estate and also Guardian to Charles' freed slave, Winny, who was bequeathed a prime piece of Gulf front property with a dwelling and outbuildings. Winny's need for existence money led to her lot being auctioned – with Pierre Saucier being the highest bidder. This land adjoined the property which he and another brother-in-law, Jean Baptiste Toulmé, of Bay St. Louis, had previously purchased from Charles Asnard. Soon afterward, brother-in-law Ramon Lizana also purchased an adjoining lot to the east.

Pierre Saucier and Family

The first encounter with Federal troops was when the 9th Connecticut Infantry invaded Pass Christian. The Union troops landed on April 3, 1862, while in pursuit of Major Lovell's small Confederate force which had retreated north of the town. The "Bedsheet Surrender" apparently stopped the shelling of beachfront dwellings as a result of Mrs. Manders signalling out to the Federal gunboats to cease their shore offensive.

In 1864, while the ravages of the Civil War were still ongoing, Pierre Saucier recieved news that one of his sons was wounded at Vicksburg. On the return home the young man died followed by the father's death. It was both bodies that reached the Pass soon after, each packed in charcoal filled boxes that were buried in the family cemetery in DeLisle.

Following the war, during the Reconstruction Period, the Pierre Saucier home was billeted as residential quarters for the officers that had set up a military post at the Pass. Those of the Saucier family that remained were forced to live on the second level. One of these was Mary Catherine Walker, wife of Anatole Jacques Saucier, who hid her infant son, Anatole Pierre in the

attic for fear of its young life. To quiet her concerns, the Union officer in charge tactfully asked her if she could play "*Bonnie Blue Flag*," which was a favorite Mississippian war tune. Proudly and defiantly she replied that she most certainly could. Smiling, the officer guided her to the piano. After more than a year, the departing Federal troops were thanked for having maintained a proper decorum of chivalry.

Another family story relates that during the same period, the older Anatole had to sneak into the house before nightfall in order to retrieve the family's valuables for fear of confiscation by the Federal troops.

The young infant, Anatol Pierre (Paul) grew up to become City Alderman, Mayor, and Chief of Police during the early 1900s. During a winter vacation at the Pass in 1812-13, President Woodrow Wilson arrived on Christmas Day. Then, mayor, A. P. Saucier and his family met the President at the train. It had rained for several days and water was yet standing in the streets.

"Some rain you had, Mr. Mayor," remarked Wilson.

"Aw, we jes cleaned up the place for you, Mr. President," quipped Mayor Saucier.

In 1960, his spinstress sister, Miss Louise Saucier, celebrated her 90th birthday. As one of 10 children of Anatole Jacques and Mary Catherine Walker Saucier, she reflected the family story of events that occurred. "Mother was in the parlor playing the piano when the Union soldiers walked in. Because the music was pretty the soldiers gathered around to listen and became friendly. She explained that her parents had lived in the large Saucier home when they were first married, but moved to the west side smaller house once the big house was sold. At a tender age, Louise Saucier had fond remembrances for when her mother played the *Bonnie Blue Flag*.

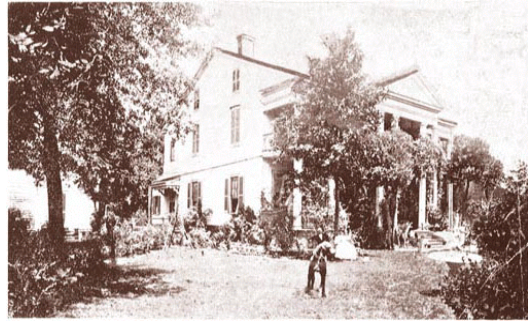
Genealogical research shows the Saucier lineage from France beginning with Louis Charles Saucier, born in 1634. He was the father of Jean Baptiste Saucier who was born in 1674 in Canada. D'Iberville recruited Jean Baptiste as one of his sergeants who became prominent Sergeant during the early settlements along the Gulf Coast. He later married Gabriel Savary, one of the girls who arrived aboard the *Pelican* that had landed at Dolphin Island near Mobile. One of their sons, Henry, born in 1706, had nine children, one of whom was Phillipe who married Marie Louise Nicaise. They settled at Delisle and had eleven children. The youngest of these was Pierre, who was born in 1804. He married Eliza Nicaise and had six children. Pierre was also the grand-nephew of Nicholas Christian Ladner, the namesake for Pass Christian. His brothers-in-law included Bertrand Lasabbe, Jean Cassibry, Jean Baptiste Toulmé, and Ramon Sebastiano Lizana. The last two, along with Pierre Saucier, acquired portions of the "Charlot Land Grant" from the freed slave, Charles Asnard. This large tract included all of the current downtown area of Pass Christian. Several years after the death of Pierre, Sr., the estate was partitioned between the family members and the large family house had to be placed for sale.

Mary Caroline Dewees, wife of Edwin W. Dewees of Red River Parish, LA

On Nov 1, 1871, the "heirs of the Estate of Pierre Saucier" consisted of Jean J. and Sarah L. (Carr) Saucier, Anatole Jacques and Mary Catherine (Walker) Saucier, Pierre Saucier, Francois Napoleon and Mary Louise (Orr) Saucier, and Evariste Marie Saucier. The 93-foot lot with the spacious Saucier manor was sold to Mary Caroline Dewees for \$4000. By the agreement, possession would take place upon full payment of the notes payable with the condition that the sellers would keep the house insured from harm and damage. Ramon Lizana, a brother-in-law of Pierre Sr., owned the property to the East while the property on the West was sold to John Bordage. The Gulf front house lot reached north to Back Road, which was also known as Second Street.

On March 26, 1873, Anatole J. & Mary C. Saucier sold a 65-foot lot on the north side of Back Road extending 460-feet deep to Edwin W. Dewees, Mary's husband, for \$1000. It was bounded by Evariste Marie Saucier on the West; Augusta Nicaise at the North; and a 12-foot wide alleyway that reached to the railroad right-of-way on the East. On July 19, 1873, a group

consisting of W.A. Champlin, his wife, Margaret; George N. Smith, his wife, Signora M.; and Elliot Henderson, sold a 77-foot wide lot extending northward by 33 arpents deep for \$300 to Edwin DeWees. A French arpent measures approximately 200 feet. It fronted south on the railroad right-of-way and was bounded on the east by Ramon Lizana, on the north by Elliot Henderson, and on the west by the heirs of Pierre Saucier.



On September 29, 1874, Philip Mallini sold 15 acres measuring 703' by 1300' located on the southern shores of Bayou Portage to Mary Dewees for \$1000.

To complete her aggressive interest in land purchases, for \$25 on December 1, 1874, Mary Dewees purchased a 12-foot wide lot fronting on Second Street and extending 475-feet deep from A.J. and Catherine Saucier. It was bounded by Second Street on the south, A. Schwarley on the east, A.J. Saucier at the north and her husband, E.W. Dewees' lot on the west.

In an apparent display of love and affection, on December 11, 1874, Edwin W. Dewees transferred his ownership of the above described two lots to his wife, Mary C. Dewees.

Notwithstanding her accumulation of property, Mary Caroline made four more purchases indicating her continued interest in Pass Christian. Between April 24, 1875 and October 15, 1875, she picked up a 12' wide by 225' deep lot from Anatole and Mary Saucier; a 50' wide lot by 430' deep from Ramon and Medard Lizana for \$200; a 71' wide lot by 200' deep from Theophile and Amelia B. Saucier for \$225; and 100 acres north of Pass Christian corporate limits from Elliot and Fanny Henderson for \$1000. With further opportunities, in 1876 she acquired from the Widow Anna Marie Jennings a 400' wide by 1082' deep lot for \$200 and a 400' by 50' lot from Ramon and Medard Lizana for \$200.

On January 2, 1880, Mary finally was able to complete her land holdings by buying the 60-foot lot adjoining her home on the west from the heirs of John Bordage.

Not much is known about Mary Caroline Dewees other than that she arrived from Louisiana's Red River country to make Pass Christian her home for a period of 10 years. Perhaps her husband had died, when she decided to sell the great home and move to Farmville, Virginia. On October 29, 1885 she sold the beautiful mansion to Louisa Jane Bidwell of New Orleans. Through succeeding years even after moving to Connecticut she eventually relieved herself of her other land holdings. It would be supposed that with her strong desire to amass such a large tract of property that she certainly would have remodeled the large home during her ten year residential stay.

Mrs. Louisa Jane Bidwell, wife of David Bidwell of New Orleans

David Bidwell was a nationally famous theatrical manager and theatre owner in New Orleans. Upon his death, Mrs. Bidwell assumed ownership and management of the St. Charles Theatre, the Academy of Music and the Phoenix House Theatre in New Orleans. She apparently employed management people to oversee her interests while she resided at Pass Christian. Having purchased the home in 1885, the major physical expansion made by her was the addition of a *Garconniere* in 1890.

She lived in the house with her step father, Mr. W.W. Cayton and his wife, giving Louise Bidwell time to pursue her favorite interest. As a dedicated fisherwoman she received recognition for her record catches.

In 1896, the book, "*Along the Gulf*," described the home as a large mansion house with broad verandas. The spacious grounds were laid out neatly with graveled walks. The well kept lawns were covered with shrubs and flowers of every variety. A severe storm of a few years

previous had destroyed 26 large trees and a winter frost that followed had reduced her orange grove and rose gardens.

In front of the home extending out into the Sound was the longest pier in Pass Christian. While describing the many types of fish she caught, of note, the book related that the U.S. Government had stocked the inland bayous, rivers, and bays with striped bass, thus expanding her fishing grounds in the Portage, Wolf, and Malini bayous and rivers. At that time, the Mexican Gulf Hotel maintained a golf course and clubhouse on Bayou Portage and Clark Street.

Louisa Jane Bidwell's interest in the Pass probably occurred after several visits while staying at the Mexican Gulf Hotel which opened in 1883, located on Davis Street and Beach Boulevard. It was probably due to her avid love for fishing that caused her on October 19, 1885 to sign her initial agreement to buy the house from Mary Caroline Dewees. The agreement was further clarified on October 29, 1885 with the acquisition of five pieces of property for \$7500. These included the 153-foot front lot south of Front Street on the Gulf, the two lots from Front Street to Second Street which combined measured 153 feet wide and 510 feet deep. The purchase also included two more lots when combined, measured 77 feet wide by approximately 475 feet deep on the north side of Second Street.

During her stay in Pass Christian there were rumors that Mrs. Bidwell was intimate with Captain John T. McDonald. She showed her fondness by giving him her large sailing and fishing schooner known as the "*Queen of the Fleet*." McDonald operated it as a fishing party boat often sailing the motorless vessel during moonlight tours.

The fishing vessel was noted for its nearly spotless racing record throughout the 1890s and early 1900s until being replaced by larger, faster schooners built for the Biloxi fisheries during World War I. The two-masted 42-foot vessel was purchased in 1895 by Mrs. Bidwell, later given to John McDonald, and years later, was lost at sea on October 16, 1923 during a storm.

John T. McDonald had been a city alderman in 1888, and served as mayor for three 2-year terms from 1890 to 1895, and served another term in 1903.

Dr. George K. Pratt and wife, Mary Louise Moore Pratt

The Pratts were very close friends of Mrs. Bidwell who, on many occasions were guests at the beautiful mansion. Through the years, their children were also welcome for long vacationing periods. Having no children of her own, Mrs. Louisa J. Bidwell left a "Will" dated June 4, 1890, bequeathing her Pass Christian property to the six children. This "Will" was probated in June 1900 indicating that Mrs. Bidwell had died that year.

As guardians and parents of the then minor children, the Pratts took full possession of the house and even further enhanced it in 1910, with a new dining room, a solarium, and a porte-cochere.

The children were John O., George, Jr., Albert, Louise, John G., and Adela. It is presumed that once they grew into adulthood and marriage, the large number of siblings sold the property at the demise of their parents.

Frank Wharton and wife Allie Lee, and Mrs. Margaret L. McGrath

Frank Wharton and his wife Allie Lee initially acquired the Lizana property which adjoins the Union Quarters on the east on September 15, 1937. He was operating a grocery store there until World War II began. Prior to entering the Coast Guard, he rented the store front as the Pass Christian Post Office. Upon receiving a service connected injury, he returned home and opened the Wharton Hardware Store after the postoffice moved to a new location.

In March of 1944, he and his wife's aunt, Mrs. Margaret L. McGrath, jointly purchased the Union Quarters property with the intentions of separate living quarters. But, it wasn't long afterward that Mrs. McGrath moved back to the Nelson Hotel, just down the street, where as owner and manager she loved the daily hustle and bustle.

The Whartons took special care to keep the house well maintained within character of its original heritage. With the urging of the Chamber of Commerce's Mrs. Elena Fitzpatrick, a Magnolia Historic Marker was placed at the home on October 6, 1960. The planting of the bronze plaque was attended by a formal dedication ceremony.

Camille's wrath struck the home in 1969 as it destroyed many others in its path, but only the roof had to be replaced to bring the mansion back to its normal beauty.

In March 1979, the Whartons opened the home to visitors during the Spring Pilgrimage for the first time since the roof's destruction. Ladies were dressed in antebellum attire and greeted the hundreds of guests to the home which was furnished with period antiques. One of these ladies in attendance was their daughter, Mrs. Ann Wharton Kitchings.

Ann, in remembering the Pratts as a young girl, had been invited to a party "next door" where the birthday celebration was held in the solarium.

As her parents aged, Ann first lost her mother and then her father, while she cared for them in her Long Beach home. She sold the vacant property in 1990.

Heinz and Frances Hoffmann

After almost four years of being unoccupied, Heinz and Frances Hoffman purchased the home on March 1, 1990, and had been in process of restoring each of the interior rooms. Since their full time occupancy in latter 1999, the Hoffmans have restored the mansion to its former magnificence and have done so with determined deference to architectural form and heritage craftsmanship. The City of Pass Christian has gained another majestic architectural gem that has been preserved by caring owners.

