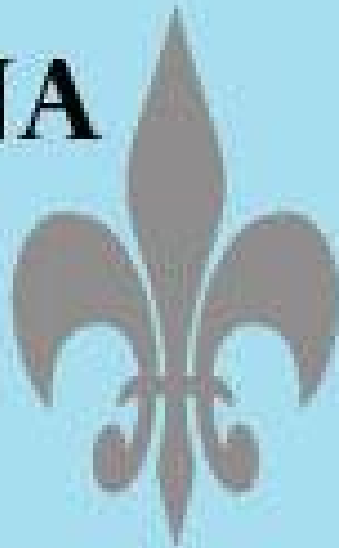


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Maspero's Exchange: Its Predecessors and Successors

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# *Maspero's Exchange: Its Predecessors and Successors*

By SAMUEL WILSON, JR.

New Orleans

Contrary to popular belief, a misconception perpetuated by numerous authors and historians, the building that housed the exchange and coffee house operated by Pierre Maspero from 1814 until his death in 1822 was not the building generally referred to as Maspero's Exchange at the uptown-river or south corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets. Rather it was located diagonally opposite on the north corner on part of the site now occupied by the Royal Orleans Hotel. Maspero's Exchange was a continuation of an earlier commercial establishment that had its beginning at another location a few years after New Orleans had become an American city.

## *The First Exchange*

When Thomas Ashe traveled down the Mississippi to New Orleans in 1806 he noted, among other things, that "there is no exchange nor any other general place of mercantile resort."<sup>1</sup> Nor had there been any sort of commercial exchange in the city during the years of French and Spanish domination. That situation soon changed and that same year Jeremiah Brown, in "a short letter to a member of Congress concerning the territory of Orleans," a thirty-one page pamphlet published in Washington City, 1806, wrote:

This city [New Orleans] in many particulars, begins to assume the appearance of an American city. . . . Our commerce also has received a new tone. We have had two banks erected here since the

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, Performed in the Year 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi* (London, 1809), p. 341.

change of government, had ample employment for the capitals of both. And however unimportant it may appear, even the late establishment of an exchange, a convenience hitherto unknown, now gives a lively complexion to our trade; a striking contrast to the late gloomy midnight traffic in which all was contraband, and exhibiting to the observer a pleasing approximation of our commercial habits to those of the parent states.<sup>2</sup>

The two banks mentioned were the Bank of the United States at the north corner of Chartres and Bienville streets and the Banque de la Louisiane, the building now Brennan's Restaurant at 417 Royal Street.

The first commercial exchange was located on the upper side of Conti Street, between Decatur and Chartres, in a building on a lot that had been purchase by François Duplessis in 1799 and occupied by him until 1806.<sup>3</sup> On August 19, of that year, the following announcement of the opening of the exchange appeared in the *Louisiana Gazette*:

#### Exchange Coffee House.

The Committee of arrangements give notice to the subscribers and the public in general, that the house will be open for business on Thursday next.

A meeting of the subscribers is requested at the Coffee House on Friday next, at one o'clock, p.m. to appoint a committee of five persons, to manage the business of the institution for the current year, and for other material objects.

P.F. DuBourg.

Secretary of the committee.

August 19.

In the same paper it was also announced that "the office of P. F. DuBourg and C. B. Dufau, sworn brokers, will be removed on the 25th instant, in the back buildings of the house formerly occupied by Mr. François Duplessis, in Conti street, and now taken for the Exchange." P. F. DuBourg was also secretary of the New Orleans Insurance Company, the office of which also moved at the same time to the building back of the Exchange. In this first New Orleans exchange, the practice of combining business functions with those of a coffee house began and continued for many years.

<sup>2</sup>A copy of this pamphlet is in the library of The Historic New Orleans Collection.

<sup>3</sup>New Orleans Notarial Archives, Acts of Pedro Pedesclaux, Vol. 35, folio 597, July 13, 1799; hereafter cited as NONA.

The Exchange soon became a city landmark; on August 22, the day after the exchange opened, the attorney and notary Eliphalet Fitch announced a creditor's meeting "at my office adjoining the house of Madame Chabot's in Conti street, nearly opposite the Exchange Coffee House" and on October 14, 1806, Ph. Labat & Co. announced that they "have taken the store belonging to Mr. Duplessis near the exchange coffee house."<sup>4</sup> On January 27, 1807, it was announced in the *Gazette* that Francis Duplessis's counting house was opened in his father's building on Conti, adjoining the Exchange Coffee House.

Various business activities took place at the Exchange such as the election of officers of the Chamber of Commerce and a meeting of the creditors of Laurent Sigur, which were both advertised in the *Louisiana Gazette* on February 12, 1808. It was also an auction mart, Alexander Milne, Jr., advertising the sale at auction of the brig *James & William* at the Exchange Coffee House and on March 29, 1809, sheriff sales were advertised to take place at the "Cafe de la Bourse" as the Exchange was known to the French population of New Orleans. Lots with buildings in the Faubourg Plaisance, a plantation on the road to the Bayou St. John and "a negro [*sic*] man named Grand Joseph" were among the various items sold at the Exchange in March 1809.

The site of the first Exchange on Conti Street between Decatur (Levee) and Chartres streets is of particular interest historically, for it was here that one of the first private lands in New Orleans was cleared when the city was founded by Bienville in 1718 and before the streets were laid out in 1721. On Leblond de Latour's "Part of the Plan of New Orleans,"<sup>5</sup> dated January 12, 1723, this area at the foot of Conti Street is shown as "land cleared by the Sr. Dubuisson," and was probably the river terminus of the portage that ran back to Bayou St. John. A note on the plan, referring to the area, states: "Part of the Plan of New Orleans where is marked in white the old clearing that several individuals made; that which is bordered in a stronger green, and marked A, is that of Mr. du Buisson, part of which is found on the quay and in the street, and in order to indemnify him the Council has granted him the three lots marked B, C, D."

The journal of Bénard de La Harpe records that Monsieur Dubuisson, who had (with Paris Duvernay) a concession at the former village of the Bayagoulas and Mougoulachas, arrived in Louisiana on April 28, 1718, on

<sup>4</sup>*Louisiana Courier*, August 22, 1806; October 14, 1806.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Wilson, Jr., *The Vieux Carré, New Orleans: Its Plan, Its Growth, Its Architecture* (New Orleans, 1968), p. 5.

board the vessel *La Paix* and left the colony on January 29, 1723.<sup>6</sup> In a letter of April 23, 1722, Leblond de la Tour, engineer-in-chief of Louisiana, referred to Pauger's problems when laying out the streets of the new city, "and the vexation that has been caused him on the subject of the lots by the Sr. du [*sic*] Buisson, who, because he had cleared a site on the banks of the river, thought himself empowered to build as he might see fit without regularity and without form"<sup>7</sup> If Dubuisson had actually built a house in what became the alignment of Conti Street, it must have been one of the first private houses in New Orleans, and it was either destroyed by the hurricane of September 1722 or removed on Pauger's orders and not rebuilt, for no buildings are shown on the lots granted to "Dubuisson, Concessionaire" on the early map keyed to the "List of persons to whom have been marked, by alphabetical letters and numerals, lots for building, according to the project of the City of New Orleans." It was on part of Lot 24 of this map that the Exchange was established in 1806, a lot at the corner of Conti and Chartres, adjacent to one granted to Dubuisson. According to the list, this Lot 24 was first granted to M. Raguét, then transferred "to M. de Chavanne, then to the Sr. de Lachaise, Jr., who has built well."<sup>8</sup>

The Exchange was located in a handsome, two-story stuccoed brick building facing Conti Street, about fifty-three feet from the corner of Chartres, a site now (1987) occupied by part of the De la Poste Hotel. It appears in a watercolor drawing by C. A. de Armas dated January 28, 1857,<sup>9</sup> showing the corner building with the building that housed the Exchange adjacent to it. The building may have been built by François Duplessis soon after he purchased the Conti Street lot, 40' x 120', from Don Pedro Favrot on July 13, 1799, or it may have been built even earlier after the building formerly on the site was destroyed in the conflagration of 1794. On the ground floor facade of the building were six large doorways with semi-circular fan transoms. On the second-floor level, above the four center

<sup>6</sup>Jean-Baptiste Bénard de la Harpe, *Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. by Virginia Koenig and Joan Cain, ed. by Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette, La., 1971), pp. 108, 220.

<sup>7</sup>Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies, Paris, France, series C 13a, volume 6, folio 303.

<sup>8</sup>Library of Congress, Miscellaneous Louisiana Manuscripts, folio 445. The map is reproduced in Wilson, *Vieux Carré*, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>NONA, Plan Book 45A, folio 45.

doorways was a wrought-iron balcony supported on S-shaped wrought-iron brackets similar to those on the building built in 1796 at the uptown-lake corner of Royal and St. Louis streets by Bernard Tremoulet. Four French doors with louvered shutters opened onto this balcony and a similarly shuttered window was at each end of the balcony.

### Tremoulet's Exchange

As the city grew and business increased, the Exchange was soon probably too small to accommodate its activities. On March 21, 1810, the architect-builders Claude Gurlie and Joseph Guillot purchased from Julie Allain, widow of Valentin Robert Avart, the property at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets<sup>10</sup> and constructed the buildings that in 1814 became Maspero's Exchange. The map of the city drawn by Joseph Pilié, dated August 18, 1808, shows that the Avart property was located at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis in the square bounded also by Royal and Toulouse streets. The owners of the properties at the other three corners of the Chartres-St. Louis intersection were Girod, Paillet and Livaudais.<sup>11</sup>

The property that was sold at auction on February 3, 1810, as advertised in the *Moniteur* on January 31, was from the succession of the late Robert Avart and included the house at the corner of Toulouse and Chartres streets and "the lot at the corner of St. Louis and Chartres streets," as well as several slaves and several lots at a league above the city. The lot purchased by Gurlie and Guillot measured 75 feet on Chartres by 120 feet on St. Louis, and was apparently a vacant lot at the time of the sale.

Gurlie and Guillot were married to sisters and had been in business together since 1795<sup>12</sup> and continued until 1838 when they both died. Both were natives of Savoy in the Kingdom of Sardinia. Joseph Guillot, on January 26, 1801, married Catherine Paillet, daughter of Jean Paillet and Catherine Feneteau. On May 4, 1802, Claude Gurlie married her sister, Marie Louise.<sup>13</sup> The Paillet sisters may have been related to, but were not the daughters of, the Juan Paillet whose wife was Catiche (or Catherine) Villeray and who owned the building on the uptown-river corner of Chartres

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, Acts of Pedro Pedesclaux, volume 60, folio 125, March 21, 1810.

<sup>11</sup>Tulane University Library. The map is reproduced in Wilson, *Vieux Carré*, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup>NONA, Acts of Marc Lafitte, volume 21, folio 202, May 27, 1822.

<sup>13</sup>St. Louis Cathedral Archives, Marriage Records, January 26, 1801, folio 134, no. 532; May 4, 1802, folio 142, no. 576.

and St. Louis streets that has for so long been misidentified as Maspero's Exchange. Among the many important projects of Gurlie and Guillot were the Meat Market of 1813, the Mortuary Chapel of 1827, the Ursuline Convent and its chapel in 1823 and 1829, and the Tricou, Vignié and Cathedral houses of the 1830s.

When Gurlie and Guillot completed the buildings on their property at Chartres and St. Louis streets, they leased the corner building to Bernard Tremoulet on March 22, 1811.<sup>14</sup> The lease, in French, was for three years, with the right to renew. The house was described as "a large house situated in this city forming the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets, of forty-five feet of front to Chartres Street, together with all the dependencies of the said large house . . . being well known by the said lessee . . . the Sieur Tremoulet will be held to deliver the whole at the expiration of his lease in the same condition as it is presently found." As the building was said to be well known by Tremoulet, it is possible that it was actually built for his occupancy. The rent was \$4,000 per year.

A few weeks later, on May 7, 1811, Gurlie and Guillot leased the adjacent building on Chartres Street to Pierre Maspero,<sup>15</sup> the lease to run for five years, from May 1, 1811, until 1816. The building was described as "a house situated . . . in this city, adjacent to that occupied now by the Sieur Bernard Tremoulet, together with all the dependencies of the said house. . . . which the said lessee has said to know well for having seen, inspected and examined the whole and to be in the enjoyment of it since the first day of the present month." The rent for this smaller building, thirty feet in front, was \$1,300 per year.

A few days before signing the lease for Gurlie and Guillot's new building, Bernard Tremoulet transferred to John Davis the lease he held from Jean Noël Destréhan for a house on Levee (Decatur) Street between Dumaine and St. Philip.<sup>16</sup> This had been known as Tremoulet's Hotel and afterwards was operated as the United States Hotel by John Davis and his partner, Jean Phillipon, who were at the same time, in 1811, building a hotel on Bayou St. John and later operated the Orleans Theatre and built the Orleans Ballroom.

In the following lengthy advertisement in the *Louisiana Courier* of April 1, 1811, Tremoulet announced the opening of his new establishment:

<sup>14</sup>NONA, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 5, folio 197, March 22, 1811.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 5, folio 241vo, May 7, 1811.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 5, folio 127, March 13, 1811.

B. Tremoulet, grateful for the confidence reposed in him by the citizens of this city, for these 7 years past, has the honor to inform the public that he has this day opened his house, to be denominated by the Commercial Coffee House.

B. Tremoulet not being able to attend himself to all the details of that large establishment, has taken into co-partnership, his son-in-law Turpin, whose uncommon industry and assiduity are deserving of encouragement in his present undertaking. There will be found at the Commercial Coffee House, the best refreshments that can be procured in town, and an excellent ordinary of 50 covers, at one dollar a meal, provided with the best the market can afford; nothing will be spared by them to render that establishment worthy of public patronage.

There is a superbly decorated hall for the reception of large parties, and smaller rooms for the accommodation of private societies.

Large repasts will be undertaken on giving twenty-four hours notice.

B. Tremoulet & J. Turpin

Tremoulet and Turpin soon began to refer to their coffee house as the "New Exchange," as they called it in an advertisement in the *Louisiana Courier* on June 28, 1811, announcing a 4th of July celebration. It was not until August 14, 1811, however, that it was announced in the *Courier* that "from the deliberation of the merchants of this city, which took place on Saturday last, the 10th instant, the Exchange Coffee-House has been transferred from the former place to the Commercial Coffee-House corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets." In their advertisement, Tremoulet and Turpin gave the following account of the services provided by their coffee house.

They have taken the most effectual measures to be regularly supplied with prompt and positive information on everything concerning commerce and the arrival and departure of vessels. They will pay the greatest attention to letter bags which merchants or captains may leave at the Exchange Coffee-House, and will take charge of said letter bags with expense or compensation; finally, the undersigned will receive with gratitude all maritime lists and newspapers which captains or directors of exchange coffee houses of the other seaports of the Union will send to them and they will consider it as their duty to acknowledge their attention by a regular



exchange of maritime and commercial information concerning this port. . . .

The subscribers continue to take day boarders who will be served with abundance and taste.

Tremoulet & Turpin

The same newspaper also carried P. F. Dubourg's announcement that "the N. Orleans Insurance Company have removed their office to the New Exchange Commercial Coffee House kept by B. Tremoulet and Co. in St. Louis street." Sheriff's sales had continued to be held in the old Conti Street exchange for some time after the opening of Tremoulet's Commercial Coffee House, but by the time of the August 14, 1811, announcement of the transfer of the exchange, sheriff's sales were also advertised to take place at the Commercial Coffee House.

The Chartres Street building adjacent to Tremoulet's Commercial Coffee House that was leased to Pierre Maspero by Gurlie and Guillot was operated by him as a mirror and picture framing shop, dealing also in various articles imported from Europe. Operating under the name of "Maspero & Co.," one of his typical advertisements inserted in the *Louisiana Courier* on July 5, 1811, announced:

Have recently received from Europe, via the Atlantic States, an extensive assortment of looking glasses of all sizes; do. plated and silvered of all sizes and prices; . . . mirrors and guirandols of all sizes; a number of beautiful Forte-Pianos of different makers; . . . barometers and thermometers; geographical and Louisiana maps, spying glass; . . . 40 doz. Windsor chairs . . . and a variety of other articles too tedious to be enumerated.

The advertisement concluded with the following note:

N. B. MASPERO & CO., not being able to bring to perfection the manufacturing, silvering and grinding old looking glasses, on account of the climate of this place, they inform the public of their having established a correspondence in New-York for that purpose and any one willing to intrust that kind of work in their care, it will be delivered complete in three months from the date and charged reasonably.

On the same day there appeared in the *Courier*:

NOTICE—The firm of Maspero, Tory & Co., are this day expired . . . it will in future be carried on by Maspero & Co.  
Peter Maspero

Dominic Tory

In this advertisement it was mentioned that "their location is in Chartres street near the new Exchange." Pierre Maspero continued to operate his shop adjacent to the Exchange until his death in 1822.

The New Exchange under Tremoulet's direction soon took over most of the business activities that had previously been carried on in the old Exchange on Conti Street. Among interesting events of Tremoulet's first year was a meeting of the stockholders of the old "Salle de Spectacle de la rue St. Pierre to be held in one of Mr. Tremoulet's rooms in the Cafe de la Nouvelle Bourse," announced July 4, 1811, in the *Moniteur*. On January 16, 1812, the *Gazette* announced the not-guilty verdict in the case of "Edmond Forestal, who was indicted for *murder*, in taking the life of P. Pode Bare at the Commercial Coffee House in November."

The year 1811 was also the year of the great New Madrid earthquake that shook the Mississippi Valley in December as the first steamboat on the Mississippi was descending the river on its maiden voyage to New Orleans.<sup>17</sup> After-shocks were felt during the following weeks and on February 8, 1812, the *Louisiana Gazette* reported on its effect at Tremoulet's:

#### EARTHQUAKE

Yesterday morning at a few minutes after three o'clock, a shock of an Earthquake was felt in this city. The ladies generally from Mr. Tremoulet's Ball Room, had retired, some remained and a number of gentlemen, when the shock took place. All the glasses and furniture shook, the chandeliers that are suspended by chains of about three feet, vibrated for nearly a minute, many clocks stopped—several persons were awakened and leaped out of bed, supposing that robbers were breaking the house.

Vincent Nolte in his memoir tells of his encounter with the earthquake at New Madrid while descending the river on flat boats from Pittsburgh to New

<sup>17</sup>John H. B. Latrobe, *The First Steamboat Voyage on the Western Waters* (Baltimore, 1871), p. 13.

Orleans and learned of its effects as felt at the latter city, where "the chandeliers in the ballroom had all at once been observed to rock from side to side, and that number of ladies had felt quite ill, while others instantly fainted."<sup>18</sup>

Tremoulet's coffee house was also the site of meetings of the convention that resulted in Louisiana's admission as the eighteenth state of the Union in 1812. On November 5, 1811, the *Gazette* reported that "yesterday thirty members of the convention convened in a large room of Mr. Tremoulet's Coffee House, which is fitted for their accommodation." Two days later the *Gazette* carried a facetious announcement, apparently aimed at Bernard Marigny:

Proclamation by B \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_

[I] Order and Direct that the members of the Convention do punctually attend, on Thursday the 7th inst. at 11 o'clock A.M. at Tremoulet's long room and they shall hear me make one of the most eloquent, brilliant speeches ever delivered by any child of my age.

Given at my palace this 5th of November 1811

B \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_

In 1813, according to Vincent Nolte, a financial panic occurred in New Orleans resulting in runs on the Planter's Bank and the Bank of Orleans.<sup>19</sup> A meeting was called at the Exchange and a committee of five, including Nolte, was named to investigate and report on the actual condition of the banks. Nolte's report infuriated the cashier at the Planter's Bank and the affair resulted in a duel which was arranged at the Exchange. Dueling with swords or pistols was a popular way of settling disputes in New Orleans, and no doubt many were arranged at the Exchange.

When Tremoulet's three-year lease expired in 1814 it was renewed for two additional years on January 29.<sup>20</sup> In the lease the building was described as "a large house situated in this city, forming the corner of Chartres and St.

<sup>18</sup>Vincent O. Nolte, *The Memoirs of Vincent Nolte: Reminiscences in the Period of Anthony Adverse; Or, Fifty Years in Both Hemispheres*, trans. by Burton Rascoe (New York, 1934), p. 183.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>20</sup>NONA, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 8, folio 45, January 29, 1814.

Louis streets . . . being well known by lessee who has been in possession of it as tenant since the twenty second of March of the year one thousand eight hundred eleven." The rent under the new lease was to be \$4,500 per year.

On the same day that the lease was signed, Tremoulet advertised in the *Louisiana Gazette*:

New Exchange [Nouvelle Bourse]

Bd. Tremoulet

Has the honour to inform the merchants of this city that he has renewed his lease with Messrs. Gurlie and Guillot for two years, and will make every possible exertion to convince his friends and the public of his gratitude for the generous encouragement with which they have favored him.

This advertisement continued to appear through September 22, 1814, but in the meantime Tremoulet found himself in serious financial difficulties. He was obliged to apply to the parish court in an effort to obtain a three-year respite from his creditors, his petition being filed on June 25, 1814.<sup>21</sup> A meeting of his creditors had been held in the office of the notary Michel de Armas on June 13. Twenty creditors were represented at the meeting who claimed a total of over \$65,000. Tremoulet's wife, Marie Victoire Souby, was owed \$3,700 and his son Bernard, Jr., was listed for \$1,063. François Guiraud claimed \$1,342 in back wages and \$2,832 was owed to Gurlie and Guillot for unpaid rent. Most of the creditors agreed to the three-year delay and the case was so decreed by Judge James Pitot on July 20, 1814,

reserving, none the less to the said Gurlie and Guillot and François Guiraut their respective privilege and . . . decreed that the said delay granted to the said Tremoulet by his creditors shall in no matter whatever affect the claims of the said Gurlie and Guillot and François Guiraut, and it is further ordered that the property seized under execution by the Sheriff at the suit of the said Gurlie and Guillot and François Guiraut remains subject to the said seizure.

The exemption of Gurlie and Guillot from the three-year delay granted to the other creditors was due to a petition that their attorney had addressed to Judge Pitot on July 6, 1814. In this petition it was pointed out that in an

<sup>21</sup>New Orleans Public Library, City Archives, Parish Court Records, No. 92, June 25, 1814; hereafter cited as NOPL.

earlier suit brought by Gurlie and Guillot against Tremoulet for non-payment of rent for six months, an order of seizure of Tremoulet's moveable effects had been issued. It was stated that "they requested this hon'ble Court to order that the said B. Tremoulet be compelled to empty the house and the lease be annulled for want from his part to pay exactly the rent since 18 months."

As a result of the court order, the furnishings of Tremoulet's Coffee House were sold on September 15, 1814, by the sheriff of the First District Court of Louisiana. Most, if not all, of the purchasers were friends of Tremoulet and on September 21 he signed an obligation, declaring that the *Sieur Pierre Cazelar . . .* has been good enough to render him the service of lending him a sum of two thousand dollars to be used to repurchase all the moveable effects forming the installation of the Coffee-house kept by him."<sup>22</sup> Pierre Cazelar was the largest creditor for \$35,748 "for endorsements paid and to be paid." A few years later the architect Benjamin Latrobe, stopping at Tremoulet's Hotel at the corner of St. Peter and Levee [Decatur] streets, wrote of him:

January 14th, 1819. Tremoulet, who keeps this house, was, I am told, formerly a Cook, an excellent station from which to rise to the dignity of the master of a large hotel. He has lived here under the Spanish, French & American Governments & prefers the former. He has lost three large fortunes made in this place by his hotels, and is now poor & old. He & Madame Tremoulet, however, are the most vigorous & cheerful & generous old people imaginable. The causes of Tremoulet's failures have been the bank & his generous disposition. When the American Government took possession, the bank soon offered facilities to commerce that had not before existed. Tremoulet, altho' he did not meddle with commerce, aided those who did, by endorsements. Nothing, to a man unused to the terrible consequences of becoming security for others, with no other counter security but their honesty or success, seems so pleasant as to be able to assist a friend & perhaps make his fortune, by writing his name across the back of a slip of paper.

. . . .

Tremoulet, from having built & owned the two largest hotels in the city, is now the tenant of Madame Castillon, to whom the stores in the public square belong. His house is by far the filthiest which I have ever inhabited, but my room is kept clean by an

<sup>22</sup>NONA, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 8, folio 444, September 21, 1814.

excellent servant whom I have bribed to attend to me particularly. The growing Americanism of this city is strongly evidenced by the circumstance that Tremoulet's is the only French boarding house in the city, that it is unfashionable, & when he removes, for he is going to the Havanna [*sic*], there will be no other opened.<sup>23</sup>

On October 6, 1814, before the notary Michel de Armas, Gurlie and Guillot cancelled Tremoulet's lease, "without any bounty nor indemnity from one side nor the other, for the time remaining until expiration from the twenty second of September last, on which day the Sieur Bernard Tremoulet has vacated the said house and delivered it free in good condition with minor repairs to the Sieurs Claude Gurlie and Joseph Guillot who acknowledge it."<sup>24</sup> On October 7 the newspaper *Friend of the Laws* carried a sheriff's advertisement for the sale at auction at "the new coffee house (*ci-devant* Tremoulet's), of two billiard tables," as a result of the suit in the parish court of Gurlie and Guillot vs. B. Tremoulet.

Just a week before Tremoulet vacated the building,

a numerous and respectable meeting of the citizens of New Orleans and vicinity assembled pursuant to public notice at Tremoulet's Coffee-house, on the 15th day of September, 1814 to consider of the propriety of naming a committee to co-operate with the constituted authorities of the state and general governments, suggesting measures of defence and calling out the force of the country in the present emergency.<sup>25</sup>

British forces had captured Washington and burned the Capitol and the White House and it was feared that New Orleans was in imminent danger of invasion. Edward Livingston was named chairman, and a patriotic resolution was adopted expressing the loyalty of the people of Louisiana to the United States and stating "that our country is capable of defence . . . and that we will at the risque of our lives and fortunes defend it." A committee of nine members, both French and American, was appointed. A few days later, at another meeting called by Edward Livingston to take place at the

<sup>23</sup>Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans: Diary and Sketches, 1818-1820*, ed. by Samuel Wilson, Jr. (New York, 1951), p. 24.

<sup>24</sup>NONA, Acts of Michel de Armas, volume 8, folio 465, October 6, 1814.

<sup>25</sup>Arsène Lacarrière Latour, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-1815* (Philadelphia, 1816), p. 29; appendix XIII, p. xxv.

Commercial Coffee-house, the committee issued an "Address from the Committee of Public Defence to their fellow citizens,"<sup>26</sup> calling for unity between the French and American segments of the population to "form but one body, one soul, and defend to the last extremity your sovereignty, your property—defend your own lives and the dearer existence of your wives and children."

The meeting at Tremoulet's was perhaps the last and most historic event to take place in the coffee house before he vacated it on September 22. Tremoulet, however, did not abandon his business activities and announced in the *Friend of the Laws* newspaper on October 4, 1814:

#### Changing of Domicile

Bernard Tremoulet has the honor to advise the public and particularly the Gentlemen Merchants that he has transferred his Exchange, still under the title of 'Café de Commerce' [Commercial Coffee House], corner of Chartres and of St. Louis street.

He hopes that the care that he has taken to set up this new establishment will leave nothing to be desired.

In the meantime, Tremoulet's son-in-law, John Turpin, Jr., had withdrawn from his partnership with Tremoulet and taken over the operation of the old Exchange Coffee House on Conti Street, but maintained his jewelry store with his brother in the Livaudais building at the corner of St. Louis and Chartres streets.<sup>27</sup> It was perhaps to this store across St. Louis Street on the same side of Chartres that Tremoulet moved his coffee house.

#### Maspero's Exchange

Tremoulet's former location in Gurlie and Guillot's building did not long remain vacant, but was immediately occupied by Pierre Maspero, who had leased the adjacent shop in 1811 when the building was first erected. Maspero thus objected to Tremoulet's claiming to have removed the Exchange to a new location and on September 28, 1814, he inserted the following announcement in the *Louisiana Courier*:

I have been somewhat surprised at seeing in the newspapers an advertisement announcing that Mr. Tremoulet has removed his

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, appendix XIV, p. xxvii.

<sup>27</sup>New Orleans *Louisiana and Friend of the Laws*, June 3, 1813.

Exchange Coffee House; I take the liberty to inform the public that the Exchange Coffee House formerly kept by him is always at the same place and has not been removed, and that the said establishment now under my care is known under the name of the New Exchange Coffee House. Mr. Tremoulet has only removed his private business and coffee-house to another place.

P. Maspero

A day or two before this announcement and running for some time afterwards, Pierre Maspero advertised his leasing of Gurlie and Guillot's building at the corner of St. Louis and Chartres streets in the following notice:

#### Exchange Commercial Coffee House.

MR. MASPERO has the honour to inform the public that he has rented the Exchange Commercial Coffee House formerly kept by Mr. Bernard Tremoulet. He has confided the management of the establishment to his friend Mr. PHILIP ALVAREZ, and hopes by their joint endeavors, and determination to spare neither pains or expense, to conduct it in a style of elegance never before witnessed in this place, and to render the house really and permanent useful to commercial gentlemen and the public in general.

#### A READING ROOM

Will likewise be established in the upper part of the building, in which will be preserved files of the principal Gazettes in the United States, also charts, maps and books relating to geography, commerce, &c &c. To defray the expense of the reading room a subscription will be opened of five dollars from each person, and after a certain number is obtained, no person, not a subscriber, will be admitted, unless introduced by a subscriber.

In a few days Mr. Maspero will wait upon gentlemen for their subscriptions to the reading room.

Sheriff G. W. Morgan was soon advertising sales of properties seized by court order to take place "at the New Coffee-House (formerly Tremoulet's)." In French versions of these advertisements both Maspero and the sheriff referred to the building as "la Nouvelle Bourse," the New Exchange.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, November 3, 1814.



Because of the threat of a British invasion, the state legislature passed and Governor William C. C. Claiborne on December 18, 1814, signed an act prohibiting the sale of any property "belonging to successions or bankrupts, or any property seized by virtue of any execution issued by the courts of Justice . . . [because] the present crisis will oblige a great number of citizens to take up arms in defence of this state."<sup>29</sup> This moratorium on financial transactions must have ended the sheriff sales and other auctions for which Maspero's Exchange had been the center. It has been said that Andrew Jackson planned the Battle of New Orleans here but Latour, in his *History of the War*, mentions only the citizens meeting of September 15, 1814. Maspero's Exchange apparently did not become further involved in the historical events connected with the Battle of New Orleans until after it was over.

On January 23, 1815, a triumphal arch designed by the city surveyor, Joseph Pilié, was erected in the Public Square and a colorful pageant marked Jackson's triumphant entry. A solemn *te deum* in thanksgiving for the victory of January 8 followed in the cathedral.<sup>30</sup> That evening a grand ball was held at Maspero's Exchange, the ball committee including among others, Major Daniel Carmick of the Marine Corps, Commodore Daniel T. Patterson of the Navy and Vincent Nolte. Nolte wrote in his memoirs that the Exchange

. . . would have to remain closed for three days in order to give opportunity for the necessary preparations. . . . The upper part of the Exchange was arranged for dancing and the under part for supper, with flowers, colored lamps and transparencies with inscriptions. Before supper, Jackson desired to look at the arrangements unaccompanied, and I was appointed to conduct him. One of the transparencies between the arcades bore the inscription, 'Jackson and Victory: they are but one.' The general looked at it, and turned about to me in a hail-fellow sort of way, saying, 'Why did you not write 'Hickory and Victory: they are but one.' After supper we were treated to a most delicious *pas de deux* by the conqueror and his spouse, an emigrant of the lower classes, whom he had from a Georgian planter, and who explained by her enormous corpulence that French saying, 'She shows how far the

<sup>29</sup>Latour, *Historical Memoir*, appendix XXII, p. xl.

<sup>30</sup>Leonard V. Huber and Samuel Wilson, Jr., *The Basilica on Jackson Square* (New Orleans, 1965), p. 19.

skin can be stretched.' To see these two figures, the general a long, haggard man, with limbs like a skeleton, and Madame la Generale, a short, fat dumpling, bobbing opposite each other like half-drunken Indians, to the wild melody of *Possum up de Gum Tree*, and endeavoring to make a spring into the air, was very remarkable, and far more edifying a spectacle than any European ballet could possibly have furnished.<sup>31</sup>

On March 3 a state legislator, Louis Louailler, published an article in the *Louisiana Courier* highly critical of an order issued by Jackson regarding the release of French citizens from military service. Jackson ordered Louailler's arrest as a spy and on Sunday, March 5, a file of soldiers seized him on the steps of the Exchange Coffee-House.<sup>32</sup> Federal District Judge Dominic Hall issued a writ of *habeas corpus* for him, whereupon Jackson had the judge arrested for "aiding, abetting and exciting mutiny." When the war was finally officially over and martial law ended, Jackson was cited for contempt of court, found guilty and fined \$1,000 and costs. The general promptly paid the fine and a crowd of his admirers conducted him triumphantly to Maspero's where he addressed the grateful citizens.<sup>33</sup>

After the excitement of the war and its aftermath, Maspero's Exchange continued its routine business of auctions of land, buildings, slaves, etc., but the business was apparently not a very prosperous one and Gurlie and Guillot contracted with a new tenant for their building. On July 1, 1817, they leased the Exchange to André Montillet and Philip Alvarez, the latter of whom had been its manager for his friend, Maspero, in 1814. Maspero, however, did not vacate the building and on October 1, 1817, Montillet and Alvarez filed a protest through the notary Christoval de Armas, who recorded it in part as follows:

I declare transporting myself before the Sieur Gurlie, building contractor in this city and one of the associates of the firm known under the name of Gurlie and Guillot, whom I found near the new building [the Presbytère] belonging to the fabric [of the Cathedral] and for which he was directing the works.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Nolte, *Fifty Years*, p. 238.

<sup>32</sup>Marquis James, *Andrew Jackson, The Border Captain* (Indianapolis, 1933), p. 282.

<sup>33</sup>Edward Larocque Tinker, *Creole City: Its Past and Its People* (New York, 1953), p. 53.

<sup>34</sup>NONA, Acts of Christoval de Armas, volume 1, folio 175, October 1, 1817.

Montillet and Alvarez then filed suit against Gurlie and Guillot, asking \$7,000 in damages. Their petition, filed March 2, 1818, in the parish court (#1445), stated that "your petitioners contracted with Messrs. Gurlie and Guillot of the said city of New Orleans, proprietors of the French or New Exchange together with the adjoining house situated in Chartres street of the said city, both now held by Pierre Maspero, for the renting of the said exchange and the said adjoining house with their dependencies for the term of five years at and for the consideration of seven thousand dollars per annum"<sup>35</sup>

Montillet and Alvarez claimed that they had suffered losses of seven thousand dollars as a result of the refusal to deliver the buildings on October 1, 1817. In a supplementary petition filed March 2, 1818, they increased their claim for damages to \$14,000. Probably as a result of this suit and a judgment against them, Gurlie and Guillot decided to sell both the Exchange and the adjacent Chartres Street building, both still occupied by Maspero.

On August 22, 1818, Gurlie and Guillot appeared before the notary Marc Lafitte and asked him to notify Pierre Maspero that they had "the intention of putting up at auction, their house . . . known and designated under the name of the New Exchange [la Nouvelle Bourse]" and that he be summoned "to vacate at the latest by the thirtieth of September next." The notary in the presence of two witnesses, immediately served a copy of the notice to vacate on Maspero.<sup>36</sup>

The proposed sale apparently did not take place and some months later, before the same notary, Lafitte, on March 10, 1819, Gurlie and Guillot again leased the Exchange to Maspero,<sup>37</sup> this time for a period of five years at the rate of seven thousand dollars per year, to be paid in monthly installments. Maspero then continued to operate the Exchange, as well as his business in the adjacent building. In addition, he took on the position of auctioneer at the Exchange in association with Francis Dutillet.

Gambling and billiards were among the principal activities at Maspero's Exchange. Benjamin Latrobe noted in his journal for April 18, 1819, that "on coming near the French coffee house, I heard the blow of the cue and the rebound of billiard balls upstairs. The coffee house was full."<sup>38</sup> Some

<sup>35</sup>NOPL, Parish Court No. 1445, March 2, 1818.

<sup>36</sup>NONA, Acts of Marc Lafitte, volume 13, folio 407, August 22, 1818.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, Acts of Marc Lafitte, volume 14, folio 109, March 10, 1819.

<sup>38</sup>Wilson, ed., *Impressions*, p. 131.

months later, a columnist in the *Louisiana Gazette* for October 23, 1819, described the auction of the gambling concession of Maspero's Exchange where, after a long and tedious succession of bids, the lease was finally sold for the sum of sixteen thousand dollars.

On December 1, 1820, an advertisement appeared in the *Louisiana Courier* that on January 15, 1821, at the Exchange Coffee House, Dutillet & Maspero would sell for the heirs of Marius Pons Bringier a house on Bourbon between St. Ann and Dumaine streets. The association with Dutillet seems to have lasted a short time, for in Paxton's City Directory for 1822 only Maspero's name appears in the following full page advertisement:

Peter Maspero  
Auctioneer  
Informs his friends and the public that  
he continues to sell all kinds of  
Merchandise, Real Estate  
and  
Slaves  
and that they may rely on his punctuality in  
every instance.  
No Coffee-House dues will be charged on  
real estate or slaves, left with him for sale.

The lower half of the page contained the following:

Looking-glass & Gilding  
Manufactory  
P. Maspero  
also informs the public that he continues his  
Looking-glass & Gilding Manufactory  
In Chartres street next door below his Exchange,  
where orders in his line will receive the most prompt  
attention and will be executed in the first style of  
fashion and elegance, by experienced workmen.

On May 27, 1822, Gurlie and Guillot, owners of other buildings besides the Exchange, appeared before the notary Marc Lafitte to arrange a division of the properties owned by their partnership, which had existed since 1795. They agreed, however, to retain joint ownership of

. . . a lot situated in the city forming one of the corners of St. Louis and Chartres streets, having one hundred twenty feet front on this first street and seventy five feet front on this second street, on

which lot they have erected some houses and accessory buildings a great part of which is rented to the Sr. Maspero, forming an establishment known under the denomination of 'Exchange' and the other part rented to the same Sieur Maspero for his private business.<sup>39</sup>

Financial problems brought on a series of lawsuits against Maspero in the summer of 1822. On August 21 that year Simon and Salomon Sacerdotte filed a suit against him for \$2,000 and on September 12 Samuel Hermann sued him for a debt of \$120 and an order for sequestration "of all the property found on the premises" was issued the same day.<sup>40</sup> On September 11, 1822, Gurlie and Guillot filed a suit against Pierre Maspero for \$10,442 for unpaid rent through August 31 on their two buildings and also for a pipe of brandy containing 116 gallons, valued at \$217.50. In their petition, submitted to Judge James Pitot of the parish court by their counsel, Moreau Lislet and Dumoulin, Gurlie and Guillot asked that "the moveable effects which were in the said house thus leased, to be seized for surety of the payment of the said rents." They stated that the value of the said effects were by far under the amount due and as Maspero had failed to comply with "the conditions of his lease which was oriented in his favor by not faithfully paying the said rents," the judge was asked that it be ordained

that the said lease shall be and remain rescinded and that he [Maspero] be sentenced to deliver to your petitioners the house, appurtenances and dependencies in good and tenantable repair in three [days] after the date of the judgment be herein given and in default of making the said delivery in the said delay, and after it expires, to authorize the Sheriff of your honorable court to put your petitioners in possession of the said house, its appurtenances and dependencies at the costs of the said Maspero and finally condemn him in the costs of the present suit.<sup>41</sup>

These mounting difficulties were apparently more than Maspero could bear and on September 16, 1822, he died "at the present place of residence," six miles below the city. His obituary appeared in the *Louisiana Courier* on Wednesday, September 18, 1822:

<sup>39</sup>NONA, Acts of Marc Lafitte, volume 21, folio 202.

<sup>40</sup>NOPL, Parish Court Nos. 3303, 3323.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, Parish Court Nos. 3320, 3327.

DIED in the night of from the 16th to the 17th inst. Mr. P. MASPERO, an honest citizen of this city. If the too great confidence which Mr. Maspero had in all men, was the occasion of his ruin and his death, it was at least a proof of the goodness of his heart. He leaves a wife and four small children.

Pierre Antoine Maspero, born February 22, 1771, at Como in the Milanois in Italy, was buried on September 17, in St. Louis Cemetery (No. 1) after services in St. Louis Cathedral.<sup>42</sup> He was the son of Innocens Antoine Maspero and Laura Porta, aged fifty-one years. According to the Board of Health report of interments in the Catholic Burying Ground, published in the *Louisiana Courier* on September 20, Maspero had died of a "lingering illness." Surviving him were his widow, Marie Genevieve de Monceaux, and four minor children, Pierre, Pliny, Azélie, and Zulime.

An inventory of the estate was begun by order of the probate court by Martin Blache, register of wills, on October 1, 1822.<sup>43</sup> Every item of furniture and equipment in the Exchange was listed, room by room, the rooms being listed as follows:

In a small Boarder's room opening on the yard of the store fronting Chartres street. . . .

In another small adjoining boarder's room opening on the same yard as the aforesaid. . . .

In the gallery near the staircase of the house in which the Deceased resided. . . .

In a large room fronting on Chartres street. . . .

In the back room adjoining the proceeding. . . .

In a small pantry near the aforesaid room. . . .

In the second room opening on the gallery. . . .

In a small room separating the two vestibules. . . .

In the first Boarder's room opening on the yard of the Coffee-House. . . .

In the Second room adjoining the proceeding and opening also on the yard of the Coffee-House. . . .

In the dining room. . . .

In a boarder's room opening on St. Louis street. . . .

<sup>42</sup>St. Louis Cathedral Archives, Funeral Records, 67, no. 679.

<sup>43</sup>NOPL, Probate Court Records, Peter Maspero's Inventory, October 1, 1822.

In an interior room opening on the billiard room & on the vestibule. . . .

In an adjoining room in which the billiard bar was kept. . . .

In the billiard room. . . .

In the kitchen. . . .

In a small closet opening on the entry of the upper floor of the coffee-house near the staircase. . . .

Above the staircase. . . .

In a pantry above & near the staircase of the kitchen. . . .

In the gallery near the aforesaid staircase. . . .

In the room near the staircase of the kitchen and adjoining the dining room. . . .

In the closet opening on the staircase of the kitchen in the first story. . . .

In the second and third rooms adjoining the above. . . .

In the rooms of the first story, opening on the broad step of the coffee-house staircase. . . .

In the coal room, near the kitchen. . . .

In an adjoining cellar. . . .

In the coffee-house. . . .

It is interesting to note that in the Coffee-house there hung "one picture of the declaration of the Independence of the United States, valued at five dollars; one large picture of Washington valued at twenty dollars; and one large picture of Napoleon valued at fifty dollars."

The contents of Maspero's store adjacent to the Exchange were also inventoried, as were the books, accounts, notes, and papers belonging to the estate. The slaves inventoried were:

<i>John</i> , a Negro man, born in Guinea, age of about twenty-five years, a cook and a good servant, long ago in this country, valued at .....	\$700
<i>Romain</i> , a Negro man, born in Senegal, age of about twenty-eight years, a cook, and good servant, valued at.....	700
<i>Ferdinand</i> , a Negro man, born in Guinea, age of about twenty-five years, billiard servant, valued at.....	650
<i>Adam</i> , a Negro man, born in New Orleans, age of twenty years, a good house servant, valued at .....	650
<i>Azor</i> , a Negro man, born in Louisiana, age of twenty years, a field hand, value at.....	700
<i>Mercilite</i> , a Negro woman, a native of New Orleans, age of nineteen years, a good house servant and a tradeswoman, valued at.....	600

<i>Anna</i> , an American-born Negro woman, age of fifty years, a lunatic, valued at.....	150
<i>Gilbert</i> , an American-born Negro man, long ago in this country, age of twenty-five years, house servant, somewhat of a coach-man, lame, having had a broken leg, valued at.....	500
<i>Joseph</i> or <i>Joe</i> , an American-born mulatto man, age about thirty-five years, a smart house servant, but an untrusty fellow, valued at .....	500
<i>William</i> , an American-born Negro man, about forty years old, somewhat of a coach-man, valued at.....	450
<i>Davis</i> , an American-born mulatto man, age of twenty years, a house servant and somewhat of a coach-man, valued at .....	600

After the inventory had been completed, the Widow Maspero recalled that there was another slave, named Jean-Baptiste, who, as well as some of the other slaves, was mortgaged to Charles Durnford. The total value of the moveables, credits and slaves inventoried amounted to \$42,314.95.

On October 25, 1822, by order of Judge Pitot, J. Martin Blache, register of wills, "did report to the dwelling house of the said late Peter Maspero, at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets, for the purpose of selling the moveable effects belonging to said deceased [Pierre Maspero]." Much of the furniture of the coffee-house was purchased by Harvey Elkins, who soon after built a hotel or tavern on the abandoned Fort St. John at the entrance to Bayou St. John from Lake Pontchartrain.<sup>44</sup> Except for four billiard tables bought by Joseph Guillot at \$220 each, few items brought more than fifty dollars. Elkins paid thirty dollars for the picture of Napoleon, while that of Washington was adjudicated to a Mr. Philips for only two dollars. The total amount of the sale was only \$6,314.12 1/2. As the debts of the estate far exceeded the assets, Madame Maspero, who had, in her own name and as guardian of her minor children, been made a party to the suits against her husband, renounced her rights to the succession and Maspero's Exchange ceased to exist.

### Elkin's Exchange

A new operation was soon arranged, for on November 15, 1822, the *Louisiana Courier* carried a notice of the Lanusse auction to take place "on November 18 next by B. Montreuil, Auctioneer, at the Coffee-House, formerly Maspero's." By December 9, the sale of batture lots in the

<sup>44</sup>John Adams Paxton, *The New Orleans Annual Advertiser for 1830* (New Orleans, 1830), p. 3.



Faubourg St. Mary were advertised to be sold at "Elkins (late Maspero's) coffee-house." The city directories of 1823 and 1824 list "Harvey Elkins, New Exchange, 129 Chartres cor. St. Louis."

In 1825 Gurlie and Guillot decided to terminate their partnership and on January 20, the auctioneers Mossy and Alpuente advertised the sale of their properties to take place on February 12, at Elkins' Coffee-house.<sup>45</sup> Included in the sale was "the house and lot known by the name of Elkins' Coffee house, measuring 75 feet front on Chartres and 120 on St. Louis st." Meanwhile Elkins had erected his tavern at Spanish Fort, which he called Pontchartrain Retreat and operated it until his death in 1834, leaving it to his nephew Samuel Elkins.

### Hewlett's Exchange

Gurlie and Guillot were in serious financial difficulties and their properties were seized by their creditors, with J. B. Laporte, L. G. Hiligsberg and Charles Lesseps acting as commissioners of the assigns, according to a contract passed before the notary W. Y. Lewis on July 21, 1826. Then on January 18, 1830, before the same notary, the Exchange was sold to Dominique Seghers. Meanwhile, after Elkins gave up the operation of the Exchange Coffee House, it was taken over by James Hewlett, who considerably improved the building, according to the following article in the *Louisiana Advertiser* for December 24, 1832:

HEWETT'S EXCHANGE.—This useful establishment has always been of high respectability; and having been lately enlarged and beautified, is now one of the most elegant for its size of any in the Union. The ceiling is above nineteen feet in height; and the roof has a front of fifty-five feet on Chartres Street, by sixty two and a half on St. Louis street. The brilliancy of the four superb glass Chandeliers of twelve lamps each, the highly finished and masterly oil paintings, and ornamental imitation of wood and marble painting, with the various useful maps and other decorations form a *toute ensemble*, which surpasses every thing of the kind ever seen in this city. And we feel a pleasure in saying that the whole arrangements do great honor to the public spirit of MR. HEWLETT, the proprietor, and to the artists he has employed.

<sup>45</sup>*Louisiana Courier*, February 4, 1825.

During the period of Hewlett's operation, the place was referred to variously as "Hewlett's Exchange," the "Exchange Coffee-house" or the "New Exchange," and in French as "la bourse de Hewlett" or "la nouvelle bourse."

Joseph Holt Ingraham, in his *Southwest by a Yankee*, gives the following description of the Exchange as he saw it in 1833:

At the corner of one of the streets intersecting Chartres Street—Rue St. Louis I believe—we passed a large building, the lofty basement story of which was lighted with a glare brighter than that of noon. In the back ground, over the heads of two or three hundred loud-talking, noisy gentlemen, who were promenading and vehemently gesticulating, in all directions, through the spacious room—I discovered a bar, with its peculiar dazzling array of glasses and decanters containing 'spirits'—not of the 'the vasty deep' certainly, but of whose potent spells many were apparently trying the power, by frequent libations. This building—of which and its uses more anon—I was informed was the 'French' or 'New Exchange.'<sup>46</sup>

Ingraham returned several times to the New Exchange Coffee House and visited others, with which the city abounded. He wrote:

As the coffee houses here do not differ materially from each other except in size and richness of decoration, though some of them certainly are more fashionable resorts than others, the description of one of them will enable you perhaps to form some idea of other similar establishments in this city. Though their usual denomination is 'coffee-house,' they have no earthly, whatever may be their spiritual, right to such a distinction; it is merely a '*nomme de profession*,' assumed, I know not for what object. We entered from the street, after passing round a large Venetian screen within the door, into a spacious room, lighted by numerous lamps, at the extremity of which stood an extensive bar, arranged in addition to the usual array of glass ware, with innumerable French decorations. . . . Around the room were suspended splendid engravings and fine paintings, most of them of the most licentious description, and though many of their subjects were classical, of a voluptuous and luxurious character. This is French taste however. There are

<sup>46</sup>Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The Southwest by a Yankee*, 2 vols. (New York), I, 93.

suspended in the Exchange in Chartres-street—one of the most magnificent and public rooms in the city—paintings, which, did they occupy an equally conspicuous situation in Merchant's Hall, in Boston, would be instantly defaced by the populace.

Around the room, beneath the paintings, were arranged many small tables, at most of which three or four individuals were seated, some alternately sipping negus and puffing their segars, which are as indispensable necessities to a Creole at all times, as his right hand, eye-brows, and left shoulder in conversation. Others were reading newspapers, and occasionally assisting their comprehension of abstruse paragraphs, by hot 'coffee,' alias warm punch and slings, with which, on little japanned salvers, the active attendants were flying in all directions through the spacious room, at the beck and call of customers. The large circular bar was surrounded by a score of noisy applicants for the liquid treasures which held out to them such strong temptations. Trios, couples and units of gentlemen were promenading the well sanded floor, talking in loud tones, and gesticulating with the peculiar vehemence and rapidity of Frenchmen. Others, and by far the majority, were gathered by twos and fours around the little tables, deeply engaged in playing the most intricate, scientific, and mathematical of games termed 'Domino.' This is the most common game resorted to by the Creoles. In every café and cabaret from early in the morning, when the luxurious mint-julep has thawed out their intellects and expanded their organ of combativeness, till late at night, devotees to this childish amusement will be found clustered around the tables, with a tonic, often renewed and properly sangareed, at their elbows. Enveloped in dense clouds of tobacco-smoke issuing from their eternal segars—those inspirers of pleasant thoughts,—to whose density, with commendable perseverance and apparent goodwill, all in the café contribute,—they manoeuvre their little dotted, black and white parallelograms with wonderful pertinacity and skill.<sup>47</sup>

The 1830s were years of exceptional growth for New Orleans and the Exchange was soon found to be too small and too antiquated for the growing commercial needs of the city. American businessmen organized a new "Exchange Company" and on March 18, 1835, awarded a contract for the erection of the Merchants' Exchange on Royal Street near Canal, designed

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

by the architects Gallier and Dakin.<sup>48</sup> At the same time the same architects were preparing plans for the St. Charles Exchange Hotel. The Creoles, fearing an exodus of business from the old center of the city to the newer American section, decided that they, too, must build a new exchange. For this purpose, the Improvement Bank and the New Orleans Improvement Company were organized, with Pierre Soulé as president.

On September 28, 1835, a contract was awarded to E. W. Sewell "to execute all the carpenter's work necessary and to be made in the building now erecting and to be erected by the said company on Royal and St. Louis streets, in this city between Royal and Chartres streets."<sup>49</sup> The company had purchased all the property along St. Louis Street from Royal to Chartres, including Hewlett's Exchange, from Dominique Seghers by an act before the notary Felix Grima on May 22, 1835. The property at the corner of St. Louis and Chartres was sold "with the brick building and upper floor and other buildings on the said lot, being the establishment known by the name as 'La Nouvelle Bourse.'" Seghers had been acquiring other properties along St. Louis Street over a period of years since he purchased the Exchange in 1830.

The City Exchange, as the new establishment was called, was erected in two parts, the first extending from Royal Street to the rear of the old Exchange so that the operations of the Exchange could be moved into the new building before the old one was demolished. The new City Exchange was described in the city directory of 1838 as follows:

#### CITY EXCHANGE—ST. LOUIS. STREET

This magnificent edifice which is one of the greatest ornaments of the city, fronts on three streets,—Chartres, St. Louis, and Royal. The building being intended by the projectors to answer several purposes; as being required to combine the conveniences of a city exchange, an hotel, a bank, large ball rooms, and likewise private stores. . . .

The edifice is erected after the plans of Messrs. De Pouilly, architects, chosen from among eight competitors, in the month of June, 1835. It was soon after commenced, and is now [1838] completed, with the exception of the corner of St. Louis and Chartres streets, which will be finished during the summer.

<sup>48</sup>NONA, Acts of J. Mossy, volume 6, folio 75, March 18, 1835.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, Acts of Felix Grima, volume 7, folio 504, September 28, 1835.

The cost of the edifice will probably amount to \$600,000. . . .

. . . The main entrance to the Exchange, is formed by six columns of the composite Doric order.—Through this portico you enter into the vestibule of the Exchange, a handsome, though simple hall, 127 feet long by 40 in width. This room is used for general business, and is constantly open during waking hours.—You pass through it into one of the most beautiful rotundas in America, which is devoted exclusively to business, and is open only from noon to three o'clock, P.M. This fine room is surrounded by arcades and galleries always open to the public, (Sundays excepted).<sup>50</sup>

The part of the building intended to occupy the site of the old exchange was to contain the Improvement Bank and bathing rooms on the ground floor and dining rooms and other public rooms for the hotel on the upper floors. The contract for this "new wing which is to be constructed as an addition to the City Exchange, St. Louis street at the corner of Chartres street," was awarded to Joseph Isidore De Pouilly on February 23, 1838, before the notary Amadee Ducatel for \$220,000.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile a fire had occurred in the old exchange on April 27, 1837. The *Courier* gave the following account of the fire:

Fire—A fire broke out a few minutes after 12 o'clock last night in the roof of the Exchange corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets. The watchmen of Chartres and the adjoining streets sounded the alarm of fire and shook their rattles at least a quarter of an hour before the vigilant watchmen in the tower of the Principal could be induced to ring the bell. But thanks to our ever vigilant firemen, who were soon on the spot, and succeeded by their exertions in extinguishing the flames before the building sustained any other injury than the burning of the roof. The fire is doubtless the work of an incendiary, for it originated in the northern part of the house, fronting on the yard, where for more than four months there had been no fire in the chimneys.

On June 19, following, the Improvement Bank wrote to the City Council "asking, in consequence of the damage caused by the fire of the 27th April,

<sup>50</sup>*Gibson's Guide and Directory of Louisiana: New Orleans and Lafayette* (New

<sup>51</sup>NONA, Acts of A. Ducatel, volume 7, folio 71, February 23, 1838.

the permission to erect a temporary roof of wood over the old Exchange until the demolition of that edifice."

The damaged and abandoned building that had been erected by Gurlie and Guillot in 1810 was demolished soon after to be replaced by the addition mentioned above.

In the year 1837 there occurred the financial panic, the effects of which were felt throughout the country. It did not, however, halt the work on the completion of the St. Louis Hotel, as the City Exchange came to be called. On April 27, 1838, the *Daily Picayune* reported:

In the midst of our hard times, there are many improvements going on in different parts of the city which are calculated in some measure to cheer the gloom. Among others, we have noticed particularly a batch of fine splendid buildings going up at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets, where the Exchange formerly stood. The stone fronts, with arched doorways, are executed in superior style.

Writing about the old Exchange and the new St. Louis Hotel some forty-five years after it was erected, Lafcadio Hearn in the *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, stated:

At the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets was the celebrated Hewlett's Exchange, kept by a well-known sporting man of that name, subsequently one of the most popular proprietors of the hotel. This exchange not only contained the finest bar-room in the city, but the principal auction mart, where slaves, stocks, real estate, and all kinds of property were sold from noon to 3 o'clock P.M., the auctioneers crying their wares in a multitude of languages, the English, the French and Spanish predominating. The entire upper portion of the building was devoted exclusively to gambling and billiard rooms for the use of Mr. Hewlett's guests and patrons.

Adjoining the Exchange, on the St. Louis street side, stood a small building, in which was a cock-pit run by a man named Hicks, said to have been a partner of Hewlett. . . .

The first manager of the St. Louis Hotel was Pierre Maspero. In 1841 the magnificent structure was entirely destroyed by fire. . . . The present imposing structure was erected upon the ruins of the first St. Louis Hotel. . . . The first manager of the second St. Louis Hotel was a Spaniard named Alvarez, a very popular man, whose principal assistant was Joseph Santini. Alvarez's successor

in the management of the St. Louis Hotel was James Hewlett, the popular proprietor of Hewlett's Exchange.<sup>52</sup>

Lafcadio Hearn is not reliable when it comes to historical accuracy—the fire which destroyed the first hotel occurred on February 11, 1840, and there may be other errors in his account. Pierre Maspero, proprietor of "Maspero's Exchange," died in 1822 and it was his son who may have been the first manager of the hotel.

The great building of the St. Louis Hotel, which served for a while as the state capitol and was later named the Hotel Royal, eventually deteriorated badly and, after suffering serious damage from the September 1915 hurricane, was demolished. The site remained vacant until 1956 when the Royal Orleans Hotel was constructed, part of which now stands where Maspero's Exchange once stood. Why the Paillet House on the opposite corner came to be misidentified as Maspero's Exchange is unknown. That building at 440 Chartres was built soon after the fire of 1794, some years before Gurlie and Guillot built the one they leased to Maspero in 1814, but it apparently never housed Maspero's Exchange.

<sup>52</sup>Lafcadio Hearn, et al., *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans and Environs* (New York, 1885), p. 77.