



**Report Number:** JR0021  
**GMP Ancestor:** n/a  
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**Related Codes:** GMP-001, GMP-221, GMP-235

**Purpose:** To summarize research on enslaved persons in and around Grand Coteau, Louisiana

**Discussion:**

Located south of Opelousas, Louisiana, St. Charles College was established by the Jesuits in 1837 at Grand Coteau, Louisiana. The Religious of the Sacred Heart, who had been at Grand Coteau since 1821, donated money and assistance to help get the college on its feet. Upon arrival, the Jesuits also took charge of the church, St. Charles Borromeo, which had been established in 1819. Enslaved people are believed to have been involved in the establishment of these institutions from the earliest days of their existence.

The Jesuits in Maryland began sending some of their enslaved people to the newly established Missouri Mission in the 1820s and 1830s. They may have subsequently sent some of these individuals to help staff Grand Coteau. Additionally, the Jesuits began purchasing enslaved people soon after their arrival at Grand Coteau, and they “borrowed” labor of the slaves of their neighbors/parishioners, some of whom came from Maryland, were Catholic, and had ties to Georgetown University.

In 2021, the Jesuits published a report summarizing their research into the enslaved people at St. Charles College. Their report, entitled “Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation Project,” is available on their website (<https://www.jesuits.org/our-work/shmr/what-we-have-learned/st-charles-college-grand-coteau-louisiana/>).

Due to the ties between the Jesuits in Maryland, Missouri, and Grand Coteau, the Georgetown Memory Project (GMP) conducted limited research into the enslaved in and around Grand Coteau. In 2017, the GMP began collaborating with Sister Maureen Chicoine, RSCJ, who was researching the enslaved people belonging to the Academy of Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau. Her work has since expanded to include the convents in Natchitoches and Convent, Louisiana.<sup>1</sup>

The enslaved in and around Grand Coteau share some of the same surnames with the GU272 including Gough, Hawkins, and Eaglin. The earliest record of a purchase by St. Charles College

occurred in 1839 when Ignatius Gough, age 21, was sold by Georgetown University graduate Stephen H. Gough of St. Mary's County, Maryland.<sup>2</sup> One enslaved person carrying the surname of Gough is found among the GU272—Regis Gough (GMP-235), some 13 years older than Ignatius Gough. The GMP has identified numerous descendants of Regis Gough as well as Ignatius Gough, several of whom have done DNA testing. So far, no DNA matches have been found between the descendants of these two Gough families.

Two other surnames found in common are Hawkins and Eaglin (also Edelin, Edelen, or Edlen). The large GU272 family of Hawkins consists of descendants of Isaac Hawkins (GMP-001) who can be found in all three of the Louisiana GU272 plantation in Iberville, Ascension, and Terrebonne Parishes, as well as in Maryland. Several families carrying the surname of Hawkins are found in Grand Coteau including Frank Hawkins and his wife, Jenny Eaglin; Ben and Caroline Hawkins; John Hawkins and Rose Eaglin; and James Hawkins and Emeline Jones. So far, no DNA ties have been found among these families with the GU272 families. Only one individual carrying the surname Eaglin is found among the GU272—Harriet Ann Eaglin (GMP-221), born circa 1833 and enslaved on Henry Johnson's Chatham Plantation in Ascension Parish. The GMP has found no descendants of Harriet Ann Eaglin. Several individuals carrying the surname of Eaglin have been found in the Grand Coteau area as well. No DNA matches have yet been found between them and any of the known GU272 descendants.

Finally, descendants of one family not yet known to be connected to the Jesuits but living in the Grand Coteau area do have strong DNA ties to the GU272. James Mahoney, born circa 1857, and died in 1934, was the son of Nelson Mahoney, according to his death certificate. His parents were likely Nelson and Ann Mahoney who had a daughter named Mary who married Joseph Gardiner at Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau in 1878.<sup>3</sup> Although both Nelson Mahoney and his wife Ann were from Maryland, no connection between them and the GU272 has yet been established and Nelson's slave holder has not been identified. This family is discussed in more detail in Report JR0009.

### **Conclusion:**

The GMP has not yet found any documentary evidence directly connecting the Grand Coteau enslaved to the GU272. Only the DNA matches between descendants of James Mahoney and other GU272 descendants have been found so far. Anyone who thinks they may be descended from the Jesuit enslaved at Grand Coteau should contact Maureen Chicoine ([mchicoine@rscj.org](mailto:mchicoine@rscj.org)).

### **Endnotes:**

1. A list of enslaved persons bought and sold by the Society of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau can be found on the Society's website (<https://rscj.org/known-names>).
2. Sale by Stephen H. Gough of St. Marys County, Maryland, to Father A.P. Ladaviere, President of the Society of College of Grand Coteau, 13 Feb. 1839, Loose notarial files, St. Landry Parish Clerk of Court.

3. Donald J. Hebert, *Southwest Louisiana Records, Church and Civil Records, Volume 33–Supplement, Mixed Record (103-1953), Slave/Black Records (1765-1886), Corrections & Additions (1756-1904)* (n.p., 1984), pp. 179 and 235.