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- DATE:** 26 February 2008
- SUBJECT:** **Stanville “Estinville” Sémère, aka Stanville Simmons  
(Hunt Oil Co. vs. Clovis Julien Jr. et al., No. 52-2606, 2d Judicial District,  
Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana)**
- REPORT TO:** Miles G. Trapolin, Trapolin Law Firm  
830 Union Street, Suite 302  
New Orleans, LA 70112
- ASSIGNMENT:** Analyze the body of records accumulated in the case. Evaluate the genealogical evidence and, if necessary, acquire better evidence.
- OBJECTIVES:**
- Clarify the identity of Stanville S——.
  - Identify the legitimate heirs of Stanville Simmons.
- BACKGROUND:** Stanville Sémère, who was born about 1861 in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, and married Julia Julien on 29 March 1887 at Arnaudville, along the St. Landry–St. Martin parish line, is alleged to be one and the same as Stanville Simmons, who died 9 December 1933 at Oakville in Plaquemines Parish, leaving real property that is now at contest.
- Two family groups claim to be the sole legitimate heirs of Stanville:
- Clovis Julien Group**  
Descendants of Arsene Simmons Julien (ca. 1891–1980), allege that
- Stanville left no legitimate offspring;
  - Stanville had five siblings, of whom only one, Zenon, left offspring;
  - Arsene was the legitimate and only child of Zenon and his legitimate wife, Amy “Amos.”
- Freddy Lawrence Group**  
Descendants of Frances Simmons Odom (ca. 1895–1963) and Lovenia Simmons James (ca. 1890–1975) contend that
- Frances and Lovenia were the legitimate children of Stanville’s legitimate marriage to Julia Julien; ergo
  - collateral family lines cannot be his heirs at law.
- Both groups concur in the belief that Stanville Sémère is one and the same as Stanville Simmons.
- KEY FINDINGS:**
1. Stanville “Estinville” Sémère is, indeed, the same man as Stanville Simmons.
  2. The genealogy presented by the Clovis Julien group is highly deficient, omitting seven legitimate siblings of Stanville and dozens of their legitimate offspring.

3. Arsene Simmons was the daughter of Stanville's brother Zenon, by Amy *Moss* (not Amos)—but she was not Zenon's *legitimate* daughter.
4. Frances (Simmons) Odom and Amélie Lovenia (Simmons) James were born to the legitimate marriage of Stanville Sémère and Julia Julien.

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## STANDARDS & METHODOLOGY

### ***The expectation:***

Genealogists and litigants, alike, hope to find documents that explicitly answer their questions about age, identity, and kinship.

### ***The reality:***

Even when such records exist, they often conflict in their detail and many contain assertions that are confused or intentionally wrong.

### ***The methodology:***

To achieve a reliable reconstruction of past lives, identities, and kinships, genealogists are expected to conduct thorough research. They are expected to seek out original records (or image copies thereof) in preference to derivative sources (abstracts, certificates, extracts, or transcriptions), which are far more prone to error. Genealogists are expected to skillfully interpret each document in the context of the society that created it. They must analyze the accumulated evidence to find where the weight of the evidence lies. In many cases, the genealogist must build a case from many pieces of indirect evidence, or conflicting direct evidence, and present a proof argument for the conclusion.<sup>1</sup> All this methodology has been applied to the determination of kinship and identity within the Sémère aka Simmons family.

### ***The standard:***

Genealogical arguments must satisfy all five steps of the **Genealogical Proof Standard**:<sup>2</sup>

- Conduct a reasonably exhaustive search in reliable sources for information pertinent to the problem.
- Provide a complete, accurate citation to the source of each piece of information used.
- Analyze and correlate the collected information to assess its quality as evidence.
- Resolve any conflicts caused by items of evidence that contradict each other or the proposed solution.
- Arrive at a soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion.

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1. As set forth by the three standard text books in the field, Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997), chap. 2; Mills, *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (Baltimore: GPC, 2007), chap. 1; and Donn Devine, J.D., CG, "Defining Professionalism," and "Evidence Analysis" in E. S. Mills, *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians* (Baltimore: GPC, 2001), chap. 1 and chap. 17.

2. Board for Certification of Genealogists, *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, for the Board, 2000), 1–2.

## ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

### 1.

#### Stanville “Estinville” Sémère is one and the same as Stanville Simmons.

The “Americanization” of French family names and given names was common in nineteenth-century Louisiana—a society in which few births were registered outside New Orleans. Dozens of documents created by this family demonstrate the transition of the Sémère name into Simmons for not only Stanville but also most of his siblings. Seven records specifically prove the transition for Stanville:

- 1869 marriage record for Narcisse **Sémère** and Célèstine Robert,\* citing children born prior to marriage: Narcisse Jr., Robert, Françoise, Antoine, Zenon, **Stanville**, Romain, Émile, and Marcelite.<sup>3</sup>
- 1870 and 1880 censuses for household of Narcisse and Célèstine **Sémère**, citing Stanville as a son.<sup>4</sup>
- 1887 marriage record of “Stainville” **Sémère** and Julia Julien, citing “Stainville” as son of Narcisse Sémère and Célèstine Robert.\* Brothers Zenon and Romain Sémère witnessed the marriage.<sup>5</sup>
- 1890 marriage record of Stanville’s sister Marcelite, citing her parents as Narcisse Sémère and Célèstine Johnson\*.<sup>6</sup>
- 1894, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, and 1901 city directories, listing Narcisse and sons Zenon “Zeno,” Stanville, and Émile “Isaac,” as well as younger sons Richard “Grant” and Adeline “Daniel” and Octave “Joshua” under the *Simmons* surname, rather than their birth name *Sémère*.<sup>7</sup>
- 1900 census, placing Stanville *Simmons* and children in the home of his parents, Narcisse and Célèstine *Simmons*.<sup>8</sup>
- 1926 death certificate of Stanville’s brother Zeno S. Simmons, citing his parents as Nat Simmons and Celestine Johnson.\* (This identification is repeated in the 1930 death certificate of Stanville’s sister Celestine Amos and the 1931 death certificate of their brother Emile “Isaac” aka “Ike” Simmons.)<sup>9</sup>

**\*Note:** The identification of the elder Célèstine by the surname *Robert* in some documents and *Johnson* in others reflects two naming conventions of her society. (1) Freed slaves often used, interchangeably, the given names and surnames of one or the other parent; and (2) in rural French Louisiana, it was not uncommon for scribes to identify even freeborn females with a surname that represented their father’s or husband’s *given* name.

3. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (Lafayette, La.), marriage certificate for “Narcisse Seimer” and Célèstine (1869), with added note identifying children previously born to the couple; issued 1988, citing Book [blank], page 68. The certificate uses only a question mark for Célèstine’s surname. However, Rev. Donald J. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records, 1750–1900*, CD-ROM ed. (Rayne, La.: Hébert Publications, n.d.), interprets Célèstine’s surname as Robert. (The CD-ROM edition of Hébert covers vol. 1–35 of the original print edition.) A request by Trapolin Law Firm to Ms. Margaret Simon, Cathedral Archivist, has not yet generated a photocopy of the original record.

4. 1870 U.S. census, Lafayette Parish, La., population schedule (NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 516), Vermillionville Post Office, p. 301 (stamped), p. 116 (penned), for Narcisse Semere household; 1880 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch. (NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 455), Ward 3, ED 23, sheet 39 (penned), for “Semor, Narcis.”

5. St. Francis Regis Church (Arnaudville), vol. 2, p. 254, marriage of “Stainville” Sémère and Julia Julien.

6. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (Lafayette), vol. 7, p. 84, marriage of Marcelite “Simar” and Ozeme DeBlanc; also Lafayette Parish, La., marriage no. 4610, Marcelite Simar and Onezime DeBlanc, Office of the Clerk of Court, Lafayette.

7. *Soards’ New Orleans City Directories* (New Orleans: Printed for the Compiler, 1890–1905), 1894, p. 772; 1897, p. 797; 1898, [page number not provided on the photocopy]; 1899, p. 761; 1900, p. 803; 1901, p. 798.

8. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch. (NARA T623, roll 575), New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwelling 414, family 441, “Narcis Simmons” household.

9. Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, Orleans Parish Board of Health, Zeno S. Simmons certificate (filed 26 Dec. 1926), Celestine Amos certificate (filed 8 Feb. 1930), no file numbers shown; and “Ike” Simmons certificate (file no. 510, reg. no. 22080, Jefferson Parish (filed 23 Oct. 1931); all in Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge. Stanville’s own death certificate, for whom his son-in-law was informant, does not name parents; see Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, file no. 21, reg. no. 38-5372a (1933), Stanville Simmons.

Table 1, attached, details the “Americanization” of both surnames and forenames for ten members of the family in this generation.

## 2.

### **The genealogy presented by the Clovis–Julien group is highly deficient, omitting seven legitimate siblings of Stanville and dozens of their legitimate offspring.**

The Clovis Julien Group presents 3 specific documents that claim to provide a genealogy for the Sémère family:

- Affidavit of Sharon Anderson Edmondson, 12 September 2006 (Hunt Oil vs. Clovis Julien Jr. et al.).<sup>10</sup>
- Affidavit of Death and Heirship, by Leotha Julien Williamson and Clovis Julien Jr., 15 July 1987 (Succession of Stansville Simmons).<sup>11</sup>
- A rudimentary genealogy chart labeled “Nat Semere / Celestine Johnson” created by the Clovis Julien Group and included in Discovery documents provided to Trapolin Law Firm.

According to these documents, the parents of “Stansville Simmons” were Narcisse “Nat” and Celestine Johnson. The couple is alleged to have produced only six children, whom the Clovis Julien group names as

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Stansville Simmons  | • Zeno Simmons                          |
| • Grant Simmons       | • Narsisse Simmons                      |
| • Isiah (Ike) Simmons | • Celestine Simmons, wife of Grant Amos |

Of these, they allege, all siblings of “Stansville” died without children except Zeno, who—they allege—left one legitimate child: a daughter Arsene.

To the contrary, **Céléstine Simmons, wife of Narcisse Simmons, reported on the 1900 census that she was the mother of many children** [exact number illegible], of whom 10 were then alive.<sup>12</sup>

Those 13 children, as well as 43 grandchildren, are identified in dozens of original documents as follows:<sup>13</sup>

1. **Narcisse Jr.**, born c1851, died after 14 January 1920; legally married **Céléste Louis** and fathered 11 legitimate children, of whom 9 were still alive at the time of the 1910 census.
2. **Robert William**, born c1853, died after 1893; legally married **Josette Breaux** and fathered at least 10 legitimate children.
3. **Françoise**, born about 1855–56; legally married **Jean Field**; no known offspring.
4. **Antoine**, born c1858; legally married **Armantine Rabot** and fathered at least 11 legitimate children.

10. Affidavit of Sharon Anderson Edmondson, 12 Sept. 2006, Hunt Oil vs. Clovis Julien Jr. et al., Docket no. 52-606, 25th Judicial District Court, Plaquemines Parish.

11. Leotha Julien Williamson and Clovis Julien Jr., “Affidavit of Death and Heirship,” 27 February 1987, Succession of “Stansville” Simmons, no. 30-461, 25th Judicial District Court, Plaquemines Parish; Office of the Clerk of Court, Pointe-a-la-Hache.

12. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwelling 414, family 441, “Narcis Simmons” household.

13. For additional details and documentation, see Chart 1, “The Sémère-Simmons Family, ca. 1820–1920,” and Appendix 1: “The Sémère (aka Simmons) Family: A Genealogical Summary of the Evidence Found To Date.”

5. **Zenon “Zeno,”** born cJanuary 1860; cohabited with **Amy Moss**; legally married **Antoinette Addison Johnson**; fathered, apparently, two natural children by Amy, of whom only one survived: Arsene, wife of Clovis Julien.
6. **Stanville**, born c1861; legally married (1) **Julia Julien**; (2) **Rebecca Bibbs**; and (3) **Amelia Dishon**. By Julia he fathered five legitimate children, of whom only two survived him: Amélie Lovenia (Simmons) James and Frances (Simmons) Odom.
7. **Romain**, born c1863; legally married **Roselia Julien**, by whom he fathered at least six legitimate children.
8. **Émile “Isaac”** [*not Isaiah, as alleged*] aka **“Ike,”** born c1866–69; appears on 1900 census with a female who was said to be living with him as his “wife,” **Ophelia Florence Lewis**, by whom he fathered at least one child in 1898; no marriage record found.
9. **Marcelite**, born c1866–69; legally married **Onésime “Ozème” DeBlanc aka Despanet**, by whom she produced at least six legitimate children.
10. **Adeline “Daniel,”** a *son*, born c1869–70; apparently died 1898–1900; no known marriage or children.
11. **Octave “Joshua”** born c1871–72; died 1894–1900, in New Orleans; no known marriage or children.
12. **Célèstine**, born 22 May 1873, married (1) before 1900 [spouse not yet positively identified]; and (2) c1904, **Sosthène “Grant” Amos**; produced no known children.
13. **Richard “Grant,”** born 4 May 1875; died 29 March 1913; appears on 1900 census with **Bridget**, said to be his wife; no marriage record found, no known children.

*If Stanville had not left legitimate children, then the legitimate offspring of all these siblings would be his heirs—not just one allegedly legitimate child of his brother Zenon.*

### 3.

#### **Arsene Simmons was the daughter of Stanville’s brother Zenon —but she was not Zenon’s *legitimate* daughter.**

There has been found no evidence of a marriage between Zenon aka “Zeno” and Amy Moss. Rather, the records show beyond a reasonable doubt that the couple never legalized their cohabitation. As detailed on Table 2, *all seven* of Zeno’s brothers and sisters who began a family in their home community—which Zeno did—*executed legal marriages*. For all four of his siblings who began their families in Lafayette—as Zeno did— there exist two independently created original records that attest a legal marriage:

- the civil license and/or the officiating minister’s or judge’s return at the parish courthouse;
- the sacramental marriage entry at the parish church.

For Zeno and Amy, no such record has been produced by the Clovis Julien Group and one appears not to exist at all. This conclusion is based upon the following:

- No license was obtained by the couple in the parish in which they grew up and had their first child, and no return was filed by an officiating minister or judge or justice.<sup>14</sup>
- No church marriage entry is found for them in the parish in which they grew up and had their first child baptized.<sup>15</sup>
- No church marriage entry is reported for them anywhere in the pre-1900 church records for South Louisiana, abstracted and published in the series by Rev. Donald J. Hébert.<sup>16</sup>
- No church marriage record has been found for them in New Orleans, where they lived after 1897.<sup>17</sup>
- No civil marriage record is reported for them in any of the New Orleans or statewide marriage indexes and data bases.<sup>18</sup>

What Zeno and Amy *did* create were three documents of types that specifically address the legitimacy of a marriage:

1. **Baptism of Arsene, their daughter:** By Catholic practice, baptismal records of infants born of a legitimate marriage specifically state “legitimate child of ....”

As demonstrated in Table 3, twelve baptismal records (photocopies of the full original entries, as opposed to certificates that extract only partial data)<sup>19</sup> have been provided for this family by the two parishes where the Sémère-Simmons children were baptized between 1870 and 1900. All of those documents specifically state that the child was “*fils (or fille) légitime*” (legitimate son or daughter) of the named parents—except one. Arsene’s record is the sole exception. She is merely said to be “*fille de Zenon Sémère et Amy Moss.*”<sup>20</sup>

2. **Civil death certificate for Amy Moss aka Simmons:** Two types of forms were used during the lifetimes of Zeno and Amy. Each called for identification of married parties, as such; but the two expressed that identification differently.

- The practice followed by the Board of Health in New Orleans was to note, in a blank space at the bottom left of the form, that a man or woman was married—when that was indeed the case. If the individual was not married, the space was left blank.

14. Lafayette Parish, Brides Index A–Z (1823–1927), Grooms Index A–Z (1823–1927), microfilm 871178 and 871180, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

15. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records, 1750–1900*, CD-ROM ed.

16. Ibid.

17. The search of New Orleans area registers (which are records not included in Hébert) was conducted in May 2007 by Jack Belsom of the Archives, Archdiocese of New Orleans, for the Trapolin Law Firm.

18. “Louisiana Marriages, 1718–1925,” *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=7837>); “New Orleans, Louisiana, Marriage Records Index, 1831–1925,” *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6500>); and “Louisiana Marriage Records, 1851–1900,” *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=5228>).

19. Under genealogical standards of evidence, legitimacy can never be determined from the baptismal *certificates* issued by Catholic churches. As a matter of practice in Louisiana, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the certificates omit all material that speaks to legitimacy, race (in most cases), cause of death, and other factors considered by the Church to be “private.”

The rules of genealogical evidence mandate use of the *original* records, or officially reproduced image copies thereof, to ensure that all relevant evidence is found and considered. In practice, this may not be possible for church records that are privately owned, as when records are too fragile to photocopy or churches deny access to the originals. In such cases, certificates or published abstracts such as the Hébert series may be considered “best evidence” until and unless the handicap is resolved. However, certificates and published abstracts cannot be accepted as “best evidence” so long as the original registers are available for use.

20. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (Lafayette), vol. 9, p. 197, baptism no. 294. The full text reads, “*L’an [1891], le 17 Octobre, j’ai baptise Arcene néé 2 Aout dernier, fille de Zenon Semere et Amy Moss. [Sponsors:] Joseph Amos et Marie Cassimere.*” For comparative examples, demonstrating that the practice was habitual throughout Louisiana parishes and across two centuries, see Exhibit 2.

- Statewide certificates issued in the 1900s use a different format; typically, they carry preprinted options to check off the decedent’s status as *Single*, *Married*, or *Widowed*.

As demonstrated in Table 4, sixteen death certificates have been identified and obtained for adult members of this family: six from New Orleans and ten created at the state level. The results are as follows:

***State level:***

Certificates consistently include a check mark in the *Married* or *Widowed* box.

***New Orleans:***

- For the four individuals known to be married at the time of their deaths—Mrs. Stanville Simmons (1897), Narcisse Simmons Sr. (1901), Zeno S. Simmons (1926), and Celestine Simmons Amos (1930), the forms consistently state “Deceased was married.”<sup>21</sup>
- For the one individual known to be single at the time of his death, Richard “Grant” Simmons (1913), the form correctly leaves that space blank.<sup>22</sup>
- For Amy Moss aka Simmons, the one individual who created no marriage record (but did produce a child by Zeno whose baptismal record indicates the parents were not married), the death certificate correctly leaves that space blank. At no point does the certificate mention Zeno—a stark contrast to the 1897 certificate for Stanville’s wife that specifically calls her “Mrs. Stanville Simmons.”<sup>23</sup>

3. **1919 Marriage of Zeno to Antoinette Johnson.** When Zeno applied for a marriage record, the license he filled in explicitly identifies Antoinette as a widow. It does not identify Zenon as a widower.<sup>24</sup>

The one additional document created during the lifetime of Amy Moss aka Simmons that addresses the issue of marriage is the 1900 U.S. census. However, census takers recorded as “head of household” and “wife” all individuals who were living together as man and wife, regardless of whether the union was legal or common-law. At no point in the lifetime of Zeno and Amy, did the Census Bureau instruct enumerators to require proof of marriage.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, all evidence created by Zeno and Amy that address the legality of their marriage attests that a legal marriage did not exist. That conclusion is supported by the marital patterns of Zeno’s siblings and by the evidentiary patterns of the other baptismal and death records created by Zeno and his siblings.

Zeno’s situation reflects the culture into which he was born. He was Catholic. Amy Moss was Baptist, of mixed parentage, whose apparent father was white Anglo Protestant.<sup>26</sup> Among staunch Catholics—well

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21. Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, Orleans Parish Board of Health: Mrs. Stanville Simmons certificate (filed 23 November 1897); Narcisse Simmons certificate (filed 4 January 1901); Zeno S. Simmons certificate (filed 3 December 1926); and Celestine Amos (filed 8 February 1930). No file numbers are shown on any of these certificates.

22. Ibid., Grant Simmons certificate (filed 30 March 1913).

23. Ibid., Amy Simmons certificate (filed 24 March 1910).

24. Louisiana Marriage Certificates, Zeno Simmons and Antoinette Johnson (1919), with license and minister’s return recorded at Book 84, folio 410.

25. U.S. Census Bureau, “Enumerator Instructions [1850–1950],” Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, *IPUMS USA: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series* (<http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tEnumInstr.shtm>).

26. 1880 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., 5th Ward, ED 25, p. 33-A (stamped p. 516), families 279–80. Amy’s religious affiliation is stated on her death registration.

into the 1900s—marrying “outside the Church” was a “greater sin” than “living in sin.” The former was a *commitment* to sin, while the latter held forth the prospect of repenting. Even adults who were practicing Catholics adhered to this tradition out of respect for living parents. Zeno did eventually marry outside the church, but not until after the deaths of both parents.

#### 4.

### **Frances (Simmons) Williams Odom and Amélie Lovenia (Simmons) James were born to the legitimate marriage of Stanville Sémère and Julia Julien.**

Multiple documents consistently agree that Stanville Sémère Simmons died leaving two legitimate daughters, who were his only legal heirs. The 12 key documents are as follows:

- **Original church marriage record** (Arnaudville) for “Stainville” Sémère and Julia Julien, 29 March 1887.<sup>27</sup>
- **Original church baptism record** (Arnaudville) for Amélie Simmons, born 16 May 1890, “*legitimate child* of Stanville Simmons and Julia Julien.”<sup>28</sup>
- **Original birth registration** for Frances Simmons (New Orleans), born October 1895–96, registered 18 April 1900, “*lawful issue* of Stanville Simmons and Julia Julien, deceased.”<sup>29</sup>
- **June 1900 census** (New Orleans), showing Frances Simmons, “age 4,” and Lovenia Simmons, “age 10,” as grandchildren of the head-of-household, Stanville’s father Narcisse, and listed immediately after Stanville Simmons who is cited as the widowed “son” of the head-of-household.<sup>30</sup>
- **April 1910 census** (Plaquemines), citing Frances Simmons and Lovenia Simmons as Stanville’s “daughters.”<sup>31</sup>
- **February 1920 census** (Plaquemines) showing the elderly Stanville Simmons together with his daughter Lovenia and her husband Leonard James—five doors from his daughter Frances and her husband Frank Odom.<sup>32</sup>
- **1933 death certificate** for Stanville Simmons; death reported by Leonard James, Lovenia’s husband.<sup>33</sup>
- **1947 oil and gas lease** signed by Lovenia and Frances, for the property left by the late Stanville Simmons.<sup>34</sup>

27. St. Francis Regis Church (Arnaudville), vol. 2, p. 254, marriage of “Stainville” Sémère and Julia Julien.

28. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 322. The exact text reads: “*L’an mil huit-cent-quatre-vingt-dix et le vingt-et-un Juin, j’ai baptise Amélie, née seize Mai dernier, fille légitime de Stainville Sémère et Julia Julien. Le parrain a ete Antoine Sémère et la marriane Armantine Rabot.*”

29. “Orleans Parish Birth Records for 1819–1906,” Frances Simmons certificate, unnumbered (registered 18 April 1900); Louisiana State Archives.

30. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwelling 414, family 441, “Narcis Simmons” household.

31. 1910 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., La. (NARA T624, roll 526), ED 55, sheet 67-A, dwell. 145, fam. 156, Stanville Simmons household.

32. 1920 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., La. (NARA T625, roll 613), ED 21, sheet 5-A (no dwelling or family numbers), for Stanville Simmons, Leonard and Lovenia James, and Frances and Frank “Adam.” Considering that the census fails to make separations between households, it is more probable that the elderly Stanville, who lived at poverty level, did not actually live alone in a separate house (on which he would have had to pay rent), *next door* to his daughter. In most such cases, the parent lived within the dwelling of the daughter and her spouse. Census takers had the option of citing both adult males as separate family “heads,” even when they shared a dwelling.

33. Stanville Simmons death certificate, *op. cit.*

34. Cited in “Memorandum in Support of Motion to Stay Issuance of Ruling on Motion for Summary Judgment,” 26 June 2006 (filed 6 October 2006), pp. 7–8; Hunt Oil vs. Clovis Julien et al., Docket no. 52-606, Division “A,” 25th Judicial District Court, Plaquemines Parish.

- **1961 oil and gas lease** signed by Lovenia and Frances for the same property.<sup>35</sup>
- **1963 death certificate** of Frances, naming her parents as Stanville and Julia Simmons.<sup>36</sup>
- **1965 Louisiana Power** right of way for the same property granted by Lovenia and the five legal heirs of Frances.<sup>37</sup>
- **1975 death certificate** of Lovenia, naming her parents as Stanville and Julia Simmons.<sup>38</sup>

All 12 documents attest that Frances and Amélie Lovenia were “constantly considered” children of Stanville across the course of his life and were likewise considered his legitimate children and heirs-at-law for all of their own lives.

The Clovis Julien Group has proposed, without merit, that neither daughter is legitimate on the following grounds:

–A–

*The legal birth certificate for Frances  
is not a birth certificate but only an “acknowledgment” of paternity by Stanville.*

This assertion attests unfamiliarity with Louisiana’s historic and legal records. Contrary to their assertions:

- The body of records in which Frances’s birth is registered is specifically identified by the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana as “Orleans Parish **Birth Records** for 1819–1906.” They are officially in the custody of the State Archives. They are accessed through an index that is similarly titled, “Index to Orleans Parish **Birth Records**, 1790–1897.” That index to these official birth records is maintained at both the State Archives and the New Orleans Public Library.<sup>39</sup> No other body of official birth records exist for Orleans Parish—only this one in which Stanville registered the births of his daughters. That record was created in a *bound* register that allowed for no records of other types to be accidentally interfiled with the official birth records.
- Acknowledgments of paternity were distinctly different records commonly executed before a notary, or created by declaring paternity to a priest at the time an infant was baptized, or by declaring paternity in a will, or by making a request to the state legislature for a special act granting children legitimacy or the right of heirship.

The Clovis Julien Group further—and erroneously—asserts that this registration was not a *birth* registration on the grounds that her birth (like that of Stanville’s last child, Ida) was not registered *promptly*. Both registrations occurred on 18 April 1900, stating that Frances was born in October 1895 and Ida in July 1898.

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35. Ibid.

36. Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, Frances Odom certificate, file 6307328 (1963).

37. Photocopy in PHARR O.W. Property File, provided by Trapolin Law Firm; book and page not legible.

38. Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, Lovenia James certificate, state file 117 (1975).

39. Louisiana Secretary of State, “Research Library,” *Welcome to the Louisiana State Archives* (<http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/tabid/88/Default.aspx>), Vital Records discussion. Also “Birth Information in the Louisiana Division,” *New Orleans Public Library* (<http://nutrias.org/info/louinfo/births.htm>).

Again, this assertion attests that the Clovis Julien Group has no familiarity with the record set it attempts to use.

Records of past centuries cannot be evaluated by modern laws, habits, or expectations. Current Louisiana law mandates compulsory registration of births within fifteen days of childbirth.<sup>40</sup> Neither that requirement nor that custom existed at the time Frances and Ida were born. Not until 1918 did the state legislature make registration mandatory.<sup>41</sup>

On the day that Stanville visited the registrar's office for the New Orleans Board of Health, a total of 47 births were registered by fathers living in New Orleans and its suburbs. An examination of all 47 records reveals the registration patterns by which Stanville's action must be judged. Among those patterns defined on Table 5 are these two:

#### *Time Frame*

- **Only 6.3%** (n=3) of births were registered within a month (twice the time allowed by modern law).
- **19.1%** (n=9) were registered after a delay of 2–5 years (the time frame in which Stanville registered his daughters).

#### *Legitimacy*

- **8.4%** are specifically said to be “illegitimate” (with registrations ranging from 1 month to 12 years).
- **All others** (including Stanville's two daughters) are specifically said to be “Of Lawful Birth.”

The Clovis Julien Group also contends, without merit:

–B–

*Stanville's legitimate daughter Amélie, born 1890, died without issue.*

No proof is presented by the Clovis Julien Group to support this assertion. To the contrary, Stanville's 1900 census household includes this 10-year-old daughter under her family “call name” *Lovenia*.

To interpret the evidence correctly, one must understand the naming and name-change habits of emancipated slaves (aka freedmen) in both Louisiana and the South at large. Three key factors created a variety of name changes within the Sémère aka Simmons family.

- Slave transitions to free status
- Naming customs in Louisiana culture
- Catholic baptismal practices

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40. Law Library of Congress, *Guide to Law Online* (<http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=98481>), *Louisiana Codes and Revised Statutes*: Revised Statutes, chap. 2, pt. 1, RS 40:44.

41. Historical Records Survey, *Guide to the Public Vital Statistics Records in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Louisiana State Board of Health, 1942), p. 5, citing “La. A., 918, #257, sec. 1.”

### *Slave Transitions to Free Status:*

At the close of the Civil War, ex-slaves sought not only to make new lives for themselves but also to forge new identities that reflected their sense of self.

A major part of that new identity was the selection of a new name. Many ex-slaves changed their names several times before settling upon one they felt comfortable using. In his memoirs, Frederick Douglass recounts his own transition through four other names before deciding on a *fifth name*—the one by which history knows him.<sup>42</sup>

### *Naming Customs in Louisiana Culture*

Catholic slaves and freedmen in Louisiana were heir to two other customs as old as Louisiana itself:

- a tradition of adopting a new name at confirmation that would be added to the baptismal name or names;
- a tradition of adopting an *alternate* name for oneself, using it in preference to the legal name under which one was baptized. Called *dits* by the earliest settlers of Louisiana, these “call names” post-Civil War might be used in lieu of the family surname or the given name, or be used as a stand-alone name in place of both given or surnames, in the fashion of a soldier’s *nom de guerre*.<sup>43</sup>

Other cultures also have had “call names” whose usage duplicates or varies from the Louisiana practice. Anglo-Americans refer to call names as “nicknames” and typically restrict them to use as a substitute for the given name. German-Americans, who frequently called children by their second given name or “middle name” would refer to that name as the “call name.” This latter pattern is also seen in the Sémère family, as illustrated below with the last son Richard Grant.

Table 1, attached, outlines name-change patterns among Stanville’s immediate family. Specifically note the following:

- 6 of the 10 sons of Narcisse and Célèstine “Americanized” the family surname.
  - 5 of the 10 sons adopted new “Anglo-American” forenames as their everyday “call names”:
1. **Robert** experimented with the given name *William* in his late teens, before leaving home.<sup>44</sup>
  2. **Zenon**, in New Orleans, dropped the nasal French *n* at the end and called himself *Zeno*.<sup>45</sup>
  3. **Richard**, after a short residence in New Orleans, dropped his first name in preference for the Anglo *Grant*.<sup>46</sup>

42. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Oxford Classics Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 96.

43. Robert de Berardinis, “Call Names, Dits, Frenchifications, Noms de Guerre, Particles, Patronymics, Phonetics, Surname Compounds, and Translations! Intercultural Name Changes in America, as Illustrated by the Offspring of Marie Catherine Horn [of New Orleans and the German Coast],” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 90 (March 2002): 37–64. The *NGS Quarterly* is the leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of genealogy.

44. This son appears in the 1869 parental marriage and legitimation of children as the 16-year-old *Robert*. The following year, on the federal enumeration of his household, the family called him *William* (age 17); see 1870 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., Vermillionville P.O., p. 301 (stamped), p. 116 (penned), for Narcisse Semere household. Past his teens, he favored the name Robert, as evidenced by his marriage records and the baptismal records of his children.

45. For example, see *Soards’ New Orleans City Directories*, 1894, p. 772; 1897, p. 797; 1899, p. 761 (which spells the name “Zenow”); 1901, p. 798 (“Zenow”); 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 415, family 442, “Zeno Simmons” household; 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch. (NARA T624, roll 525), “Pct. 15-Part precinct 3,” ED 23, sheet 3-B, dwell. 81, fam. 86, Zeno Simmons; Louisiana Marriage Certificates, Zeno Simmons and Antoinette Johnson (1919), and license and minister’s return recorded in Book 84, folio 410; 1920 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch. (NARA T625, roll 625), 3d Pct, 15th Ward, ED 253, dwell. 1, fam. 1, Zeno “Zummona” household; Zeno S. Simmons death certificate, op. cit.

46. Baptism of Richard Grant Simmons, legitimate son of Narcisse Simmons and Celestine, St. John the Evangelist Cathedral

4. **Émile** likewise used his baptismal name only in his first record in New Orleans, then switched to the Anglo-Protestant *Isaac*—with “*Ike*” as a diminutive.<sup>47</sup>
5. **Adeline**, whose French given name was more commonly given to females, is identified by that name in the parental household in both 1870 and 1880; both records clearly state that Adeline was a male. The 1894 city directory of New Orleans shows him in the parental home as “Daniel.”<sup>48</sup>
6. **Octave** also abandoned his baptismal name upon moving to New Orleans and called himself *Joshua* when the city directory’s canvasser visited the family dwellings.<sup>49</sup>
7. **Narcisse Sr.** was likewise known in New Orleans as “*Nacy*” and “*Nat*”—the latter of which is a nickname for the Anglo “Nathaniel,” not for Narcisse.<sup>50</sup>
8. **Alexander Clovis**, son of Narcisse Jr., was born and baptized under that name in April 1889, but completely abandoned both of those baptismal names as an adult and consistently called himself *Harrison*; the 1900 and 1910 censuses place him in the parental home as Harrison, with a birth month and year of April 1889.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly:

- Zeno’s common-law wife Amy called herself by the Anglo “*Emma*” on the 1900 census.<sup>52</sup>
- Célèstine Jr.’s husband Sosthène Amos also renamed himself “*Grant*” (a popular name among freed slaves who respected the Union general).<sup>53</sup>
- The only family members who did not Americanize their names were those who remained in the rural parishes of Lafayette and St. Martin.

Amélie Lovenia and her two siblings who were born among their mother’s family in St. Martin Parish, before Stanville’s settlement in New Orleans, were baptized under traditional French names (Marie Valmonia, Amélie, and Joseph Valmont, in that order). Of the three, only Amélie was still alive in 1900, by which time she—like her younger siblings Frances and Ida and most of her other surviving kinsmen in New Orleans—were all using Anglo names as call names.

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(Lafayette), vol. 7, p. 172; *Soards’ New Orleans City Directories*, 1894, p. 772 (Richard Simmons); 1899, p. 761 (Grant Simmons); 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 138, Algiers, p. 1-B, dwell. 18, fam. 18, Grant Simmons, living with brother “E iza” [E. Isaac]; 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct. 4, ED 34, Sheet 28-A, dwell. 470, fam. 533, Grant Simmons, boarder; Grant Simmons death certificate, op. cit.

47. *Soards’ New Orleans City Directories*, 1894, p. 772 (Emile Simmons); 1900, p. 803 (Isaac Simmons); 1901, p. 798 (Isaac Simmons); 1898 birth registration of Samuel Simmons, son of Isaac, “New Orleans, Louisiana, Birth Records Index, 1790–1899,” database with abstracts, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com); 1900 census, living with brother Grant (see n. 46 above); 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct. 4, Ward 15, ED 234, dwell. 293, fam. 296, Isaac Simmons, living with sister Celestine Amos; 1920 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., Ward 15, ED 259, dwell. 37, fam. 38, Isaac Simmons; death certificate of “Ike” Simmons, op. cit.

48. *Soards’ New Orleans City Directories*, 1894 (Daniel Simmons, living at 74 Jefferson with father Narcisse and brother Richard).

49. *Ibid.*, 1898 [page number not shown on photocopy], citing Joshua as a laborer at 304 Lamarque Street, the residence of his brother Zeno in 1897. Correlating the names and addresses of these Simmonses in the 1890s is abetted by the fact that few Simmonses lived then in the city.

50. *Ibid.*, 1894, p. 772 (Narcisse); 1897, p. 797 (Narcisse, at 332 Diana); 1899, p. 761 (Nacy Simmons, at 332 Diana); death certificate of Isaac Simmons, op. cit., citing father as “Nat Simmons”; death certificate of Zeno Simmons, op. cit., citing father as “Nat Simmons”; and death certificate of Celestine Amos, op. cit., citing father as “Nat Simmons.”

51. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records*, vol. 20 (1889), 354 (baptism of Alexander Clovis), citing “B.B. Ch.: v. 3, p. 70.” 1900 U.S. cens., Hancock Co., Miss., Beat 5: City of Bay St. Louis, E. D. 28, sheet 6-B, dwell. 105, fam. 105 (Narcisse Samers household); 1910 U.S. cens., Hancock Co., Miss., Beat 5: City of Bay St. Louis, E.d. 30, sheet 10A, dwell. 208, fam. 209 (Narcisse Semere household).

52. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 415, family 442, “Zeno Simmons” household.

53. 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct. 4, Ward 15, ED 234, dwell. 293, fam. 296, “Sosthene” and Celestine Amos; 1920 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., New Orleans, Ward 15, ED 253, sheet 11-A, dwell. 278, fam. 277, “Grant” and “Elestine” Amos, living with his two children by first marriage. Also see Amos’s prior waffling in the use of his name in Lafayette Parish where he married Millie Dean as “Sosthene Amos,” 24 June 1896 (Lafayette Par., marr. no. 5581) and appears on the 1900 U.S. cens., Lafayette Parish (NARA T623, roll 527), ED 42, sheet 1-B, dwell. 16, fam. 16, as “Grant” Amos, boarder (erroneously indexed at Ancestry.com as Grant “Ames”).

***Catholic Baptismal Practices:***

By Catholic practice throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Louisiana, two dictates governed the naming of infants:

- Children were traditionally named by their godparents, not their parents. Within the family, the child was often given a “call name” in the manner than modern children are given nicknames.
- Baptized individuals—infants and adults—had to be baptized under a *saint’s* name.<sup>54</sup>

Amélie Lovenia’s godparents were her uncle Antoine Sémère and his wife Armantine Rabot—a couple who chose not to follow the sibling and parental example of Americanizing their names. They remained in a close-knit, rural, French-Catholic society, and their ten children bore names that reflected that culture. When naming Stanville’s second daughter, they gave her a traditional French name as well. Thereafter, if Stanville and Julia did not care for the name the godparents bestowed upon this 1890 child, custom would dictate giving her a “call name.” In this case, they obviously did. In 1900, their 10-year-old daughter is enumerated under the Anglo name “Lovenia.” She appears under that name in the parental household again in 1910 and consistently used the name thereafter.

The church requirement of saint names for those experiencing baptism rarely allowed an exception. If the godparents chose a non-saint’s name, two options existed:

- the child could be baptized under a double name, with the first name being the saint’s name; or
- the priest would arbitrarily add a saint’s name—usually *Marie* in the case of female children.

When adults who bore a non-saint’s name presented themselves for baptism, Louisiana’s priests often applied a third option:

- They transliterated the person’s established name into a saint’s name of the nearest equivalent—e.g., *Célèste* for Sally; *Perine* for Polly, Peggy, or Patsy.

The name “Lovenia” was not and is not a saint’s name.<sup>55</sup> Almost all instances of the name in South Louisiana during the 1800s are found among Anglo migrants into the state or among female descendants of such. In the 35-volume Hébert series of some quarter-million abstracted 1750–1900 Southwest Louisiana records—a series that includes all the rural parishes in which the Sémères lived—the name Lovenia and its variant spellings appear frequently in the *courthouse* records, but far less so in the *church* records. Lovenias who do appear in the church records are, overwhelmingly, adult women who—as a bride, witness, or mother of a child—were identified by their call-name only; secondarily they were infants baptized under an added saint’s name.<sup>56</sup>

Specifically in Arnaudville, where Lovenia was baptized as Amélie in 1890, the priest who served the parish from 1875–1894 allowed no child to be baptized as Lovenia. The only appearance of the name in

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54. Canon 761 of the Code of Canon Law then in effect expressly stated: “Let parish priests take care that Christian names be given to him who is baptized; if they cannot do this, let them add the name of some saint to the name chosen by the parents.” Quoted in the classic Catholic guide to names, Donald Attwater’s *Names and Name-Days* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Publishers to the Holy See, 1939), ix.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 63, explicitly states that Lavinia was not a saint’s name and that it carries no “name day” on the Church calendar. See also “Saints & Angels,” *Catholic Online* [an official website of the Roman Catholic Church in North America] ([www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)), a current guide that does not even acknowledge the existence of the name *Lovenia*.

56. The analysis of the use of the name Lavinia in South Louisiana is made from Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records, 1750–1900*, CD-ROM ed. The variant spellings included in this search were Lavenia, Lavina, Lavinia, Levina, Levinia, Lovenia, Louvinia, Louvigna, Luvina, and Luvinia.

Arnaudville baptismal records of those two decades is as a *surname* for an emancipated family who used their Anglo-Afro mother's name as a family name.

In sum:

- The use of the French Catholic name *Amélie* at baptism followed by the use of the Anglo-American *Lovenia* as a family call name for the rest of her life was consistent with the pattern and custom of both her family and the society in which she lived.
- The same variations between registration name and call name would be found among Lovenia's offspring—as with her second-born son, whose birth was registered in 1917 under the name “Ernest,” while his family call name in 1920 was “Eddy” and he subsequently married under the name “Eddie” with no reference to his birth-registration name, Ernest.<sup>57</sup>
- Under Louisiana law, Lovenia has the presumption of legitimacy because she was born during the marriage of the couple who are consistently cited as her parents.<sup>58</sup>

The Clovis Julien Group also contends, without merit:

–C–

*Frances and Ida were not legitimate children because the birth dates stated for them on their birth registrations are at variance with some other records.*

This assertion is equally groundless. Again, it demonstrates a lack of familiarity with records of the era. Moreover, it violates the fundamentals of sound research and evidence analysis in two ways:

- It is based on an extremely incomplete research, with no apparent attempt to understand the class of records being used.
- It is guilty of presentism—that is, an attempt to force a past society to conform to quite different habits of the modern world.

As Table 6 and Table 6-A demonstrate more fully, 234 recorded ages or birth dates have been accumulated for the 87 known family members born by the 1930s. From this data, we may define the following patterns:

- for 61 individuals, there exist multiple records of their age (2 to 10 such records each)
- **for 87.5% of these family members, the records disagree as to their age or birth date.**

**Conflicting ages were overwhelmingly the rule, rather than the exception.** These conflicts exist in all types of records:

- **91.5% of cases: Censuses disagree with baptism or civil birth registrations.**
- 90.0% of cases: Censuses disagree with each other.

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<sup>57</sup> Louisiana Department of Health and New Orleans Board of Health, Ernest Williams birth certificate, 117-1917-011-05406, mother Frances Simmons; 1920 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., La. (NARA T625, roll 613), ED 21, sheet 5-A (no dwelling or family numbers), for Frank and Frances “Adam” [Odom] with her son enumerated under his stepfather's surname as “Eddy Adam.” Also Jefferson Parish Marriage Records, no. 5279 (1938), Eddie Williams to Rebecca Carter, with his half-sister Celestine Odom, witness.

<sup>58</sup> Law Library of Congress, *Guide to Law Online* (<http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=98481>), Louisiana: *Children's Code*: Art. 179, Amended Acts 1979, no. 607, §1.

- 75.0% of cases: Death records disagree with baptism or civil birth registrations
- The span of variance ranges from 1 year or less (16 cases) to 22 and 34 years (2 cases).

Five factors heavily influenced these statistics:

- Birth registrations were not mandatory when most of these family members were born.
- Individuals who could not read or write did not keep family Bibles or other personal records of births.
- In the nineteenth century, birthday celebrations were more the exception than the rule.
- Among Catholic families (even today in many cultures), a child’s *saint day* (aka “name day”) was more often celebrated—that is, the day on which the church celebrated the saint for whom the child was named. The Church’s maintenance of a calendar and weekly reminders of saint days alerted illiterate parents as to when their child’s special day should be celebrated.
- Even literate fathers, traditionally, have been less inclined to accurately remember anniversaries and birth dates.

Under these conditions, the illiterate Stanville—three years after the death of his wife—went to a government office and was asked to give specific birth dates for each child. It was not a realistic request. For anyone, in retrospect, to expect a precise answer is equally unrealistic.

**WITH SPECIFIC REGARD TO FRANCES:**

No less than 10 records cite for Frances an age, exact birth date, month/year of birth, or span of years for birth, with the following results:

| Records for: FRANCES   | Cited birth date or period                |
|--|---|
| April 1900 birth registration .....  | 15 <b>October</b> 1896 <sup>58</sup>      |
| 1 June 1900 census .....   | <b>October</b> 1895 <sup>60</sup>         |
| 15 April 1910 census .....   | 16 April 1891–15 April 1892 <sup>61</sup> |
| 1 January 1920 census .....  | 1899 <sup>62</sup>                        |
| 1 April 1930 census .....  | 2 April 1899–1 April 1900 <sup>63</sup>   |
| 1914 birth registration of son Isaiah .....  | <b>1895</b> <sup>64</sup>                 |
| 1917 birth registration of son Ernest .....  | <b>1895</b> <sup>65</sup>                 |
| 1921 birth registration of daughter Julia .....  | <b>1895</b> <sup>66</sup>                 |
| 1923 birth registration of daughter Florence .....                                       | 1899 <sup>67</sup>                        |
| 1963 death registration of Frances herself:<br>Information given by her son Isaiah ..... | <b>9 October</b> 1900 <sup>68</sup>       |
| As corrected by Health Board to agree with birth registration .....                      | <b>15 October</b> 1896 <sup>68</sup>      |

59. “Orleans Parish Birth Records for 1819–1906,” Frances Simmons certificate, unnumbered (registered 18 April 1900).  
 60. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., La., pop. sch., New Orleans, pct. 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwelling 414, family 441, “Narcis” Simmons household.  
 61. 1910 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., La., ED 55, sheet 67A, dwelling 145, family 156, Stanville Simmons household.  
 62. 1920 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., La, ED 21, sheet 5-A (no dwelling or family numbers), for Frances and Frank “Adam.”  
 63. 1930 U.S. cens., Jefferson Par., La. (NARA T626, roll 796), ED 25-12, sheet 4-B, dwell. 62, fam. 63, Frank and Frances Odom.  
 64. Louisiana Department of Health and New Orleans Board of Health, Isaiah Williams birth certificate, no. A-16245 (1914).  
 65. Ibid., Ernest Williams birth certificate, no. 117-1917-011-05406 (1917).  
 66. Ibid., Julia Odom birth certificate, no. 4985 (1921).  
 67. Ibid., Florence Odom birth certificate, no. 117-1923-066-29956 (1923).  
 68. Louisiana Death Certificates Collection, Frances Odom certificate, file 6307328 (1963).

Weighing all variations, as well as the child-spacing pattern of her mother (married 1887; children born 1888, 1890, 1892; died November 1897), *Frances's birth most likely occurred in October 1895.*

**WITH SPECIFIC REGARD TO IDA:**

Three records exist for this child, all of which cite an age or birth date:

| Records for : IDA                      | Cited birth date or period                                       |
|--|--|
| April 1900 birth registration .....    | 10 July 1898 <sup>69</sup>                                       |
| 1 June 1900 census .....               | “age 3” and “born June 1896” <sup>70</sup>                       |
| September 1901 death registration..... | “age 4” [i.e., born September 1896–September 1897] <sup>71</sup> |

Again the variations must be weighed against other relevant factors: (a) the explicitly stated fact in her birth registration that she was the “**Lawful issue** of Stanville Simmons and Julia Julien,” (b) her mother’s child-spacing pattern of roughly every two years, with Frances being the fourth child and Ida the fifth, and (c) her mother’s known date of death ten years after marriage. Considering these factors, the weight of the evidence dictates that *Ida would have been born in June or July 1897* and that she was, indeed, age 4 at the time of her death in August 1901, as her death record reports.

**By Comparison:**

These same contradictions in birth data exist for *all* the key individuals in the present suit—including those in the Clovis Julien line. Consider, for example, the records of Zeno and his daughter Arsene, along with Stanville and his daughter Amélie Lovenia, presented in the following tables:

**Zeno’s Discrepanices: 14 Years**

| Records for: ZENO                             | Cited birth date or period              |
|---|---|
| 1869 parental marriage and legitimation ..... | 1863 <sup>72</sup>                      |
| 1 June 1870 census .....                      | 1864–65 <sup>73</sup>                   |
| 1 June 1880 census .....                      | 1860–61 <sup>74</sup>                   |
| 1 June 1900 census .....                      | January 1860 <sup>75</sup>              |
| 15 April 1910 census .....                    | 16 April 1861–15 April 62 <sup>76</sup> |
| 1 January 1920 census .....                   | <b>1856</b> <sup>77</sup>               |
| December 1926 death certificate .....         | <b>1870</b> <sup>78</sup>               |

69. “Orleans Parish Birth Records for 1819–1906,” Ida Simmons certificate, unnumbered (registered 18 April 1900).  
 70. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 414, fam. 441.  
 71. Louisiana Death Certificates, Orleans Parish Board of Health, Ida Simmons certificate (filed 13 September 1901).  
 72. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (Lafayette), Marriage Certificate, Narcisse “Seimer” & Celestine (1869 marriage), issued 1988, citing Book\_\_\_\_, p.268?  
 73. 1870 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., Vermillionville P.O., p. 301, Narcisse Semere household.  
 74. 1880 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., Ward 3, ED 23, sheet 39, for “Narcis Semor” household.  
 75. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct.3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 415, fam. 442, Zeno Simmons household.  
 76. 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., “Pct. 15–Part precinct 3,” ED 23, sheet 3-B, dwell. 81, fam. 86, Zeno Simmons household.  
 77. 1920 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., 3d Pct., 15th Ward, ED 253, dwell. 1, fam. 1, “Zeno Zummona” household.  
 78. Louisiana Death Certificates, Orleans Parish Board of Health, Zeno S. Simmons certificate (filed 3 December 1926).

### Stanville's Discrepancies: 16 Years

| Records for: STANVILLE                        | Cited birth date or period                        |
|---|---|
| 1869 parental marriage and legitimation ..... | 1863 <sup>79</sup>                                |
| 1 June 1870 census .....                      | 1860–61 <sup>80</sup>                             |
| 1 June 1880 census .....                      | 1863–64 <sup>81</sup>                             |
| 1 June 1900 census .....                      | August <b>1869</b> <sup>82</sup>                  |
| 15 April 1910 census .....                    | 16 April <b>1853</b> –15 April 1854 <sup>83</sup> |
| 1 January 1920 census .....                   | 1858 <sup>84</sup>                                |
| 1 April 1930 census .....                     | 2 Apr 1861–1 April 1862 <sup>85</sup>             |
| 9 December 1933 death certificate .....       | 1863? <sup>86</sup>                               |

### Arsene's Discrepancies: 10 Years

| Records for: ARSENE                   | Cited birth date or period                     |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| October 1891 baptismal entry .....    | 2 August <b>1891</b> <sup>87</sup>             |
| 1 June 1900 census .....              | August 1891 <sup>88</sup>                      |
| 15 April 1910 census .....            | 16 April 1890–15 April 1891 <sup>89</sup>      |
| 1 January 1920 census .....           | 1891 <sup>90</sup>                             |
| 1 April 1930 census .....             | 2 April 1900–1 April <b>1901</b> <sup>91</sup> |
| November 1980 death certificate ..... | 2 August 1891 <sup>92</sup>                    |

### Amélie Lovenia's Discrepancies: 2.5 years

| Records for: AMÉLIE LOVENIA      | Cited birth date or period                |
|----------------------------------|---|
| June 1890 baptismal entry .....  | 16 May 1890 <sup>93</sup>                 |
| 1 June 1900 census .....         | December <b>1889</b> <sup>94</sup>        |
| 15 April 1910 census .....       | 16 April 1890–15 April 1891 <sup>95</sup> |
| 1 January 1920 census .....      | 1892 <sup>96</sup>                        |
| May 1975 death certificate ..... | 8 May <b>1892</b> <sup>97</sup>           |

79. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (Lafayette), Marriage Certificate, Narcisse "Seimer" & Celestine (1869 marriage), op. cit.

80. 1870 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., Vermillionville P.O., p. 301, Narcisse Semere household.

81. 1880 U.S. cens., Lafayette Par., pop. sch., Ward 3, ED 23, sheet 39, for "Narcis Semor" household.

82. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 414, fam. 441.

83. 1910 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., pop. sch., 6th Ward, p. 107, dwell. 145, fam. 156, Stanville Simmons.

84. 1920 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., [no jurisdiction] ED 21, sheet 5-A (no dwelling or family numbers), Stanville Simmons household.

85. 1930 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., Jesuits Bend, ED 38-6, Sheet 4-B, dwell. 81, fam. 81, "Semelle" Simmons household.

86. Louisiana Death Certificates, state file no. 21, reg. no. 3-5372a (1933), Stanville Simmons.

87. St. John the Evangelist Cathedral, Bapt. Book 9, p. 197, no. 294, baptism of Arcene Semere, "*filie de Zenon Semere et Amy Moss.*"

88. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct.3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 415, fam. 442, Zeno Simmons household.

89. 1910 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., "Pct. 15–Part precinct 3," ED 23, sheet 3-B, dwell. 81, fam. 86, Zeno Simmons household.

90. 1920 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., New Orleans, Ward 15, ED 259, sheet 2-A, dwell. 33, fam. 39, Clovis Julien household.

91. 1930 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., New Orleans–Algiers, Ward 15, ED 36-256, sheet 33-B, dwell. 232, fam. 232, Clovis Julien household.

92. Louisiana Death Certificates, Orleans Board of Health, Arsene Julien, City of New Orleans, No. 157 (stamped 13 Jan 1981).

93. St. Francis Regis Church (Arnaudville), vol. 4, p. 322, baptism of Amélie Sémère, "*filie légitime de Stainville Sémère et Julia Julien.*"

94. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Pct. 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 414, fam. 441.

95. 1910 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., pop. sch., 6th Ward, p. 107, dwell. 145, fam. 156, Stanville Simmons.

96. 1920 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., [no jurisdiction] ED 21, sheet 5-A (no dwell. or fam. numbers), Frank "Adam" [Odom] household.

97. Louisiana Death Certificates, "Louvinia James" certificate, state file 117, [reg. no.?] 12-829 (filed 19 May 1975).

In sum: this analysis of the age variances for all the key figures in this litigation clearly shows the following:

**1. Age records for Amélie Lovenia are the most consistent among all the key figures.**

- She was baptized in June 1890, with her date of birth guesstimated by her illiterate parents as 8 May of that year.
- The 1900 census correspondingly states that Lovenia was aged 10, although the family member who reported the data (most likely the grandmother, given that the adult males would have been at work) had considerably difficulty remembering birth months and years for all the grandchildren in the household.
- In 1910, Lovenia’s age again corresponds to the birth of Amélie.
- By 1920, like many females in their late 20s and 30s, Lovenia shaved two years off her age. (By comparison, Arsene would shave 10 years at the next census).
- As Lovenia, she continued to celebrate May as her birth month, as demonstrated by the May 1892 date her daughter reported on her death certificate.
- Beyond reasonable doubt, Amélie and Lovenia are one and the same.

**2. Frances’s birth is most-accurately placed at October 1895, two years before the death of her mother.**

- The month of October is consistently reported in all records
- The year 1895 is the most-consistently reported.
- Her birth registration explicitly identifies her as the *lawful issue* of Stanville and Julia.

**3. Ida’s birth is most-accurately placed in June or July 1897, shortly before her mother died of consumption.**

- In April 1900, her father thought she was born in the month of July.
- In June 1900, the family’s informant thought she was born in the month of June.
- The census informant guessed her birth year as 1896; her father, in her birth registration, guessed it as 1898.
- The child-spacing pattern of her mother calls for a child to be born approximately two years after Frances—i.e., 1897.
- Ida’s September 1901 death record correspondingly cites her as “4.”
- Her birth registration explicitly identifies her as the *lawful issue* of Stanville and Julia.

The Clovis Julien Group also contends, without merit:

—D—

*The lack of a baptismal records for Frances and Ida  
is evidence they were not legitimate.*

To the contrary, all evidence points to the fact that the Sémère siblings who settled in the city in the mid-1890s took great pains to leave behind their French-Catholic past. For example:

- Although they could not read or write, they spoke English by 1900, according to all the New Orleans census entries for them.
- That migrant generation has been found in none of the Catholic records of New Orleans, after a diligent search by the archives staff.

- That generation Anglicized their names, forenames as well as the family name. In doing so, three of them chose distinctly “Anglo” given names—the Biblical Daniel, Isaac, and Joshua—the class of names that Afro-American converts from Catholicism often took when baptized into a Protestant faith.
- Zeno cohabited for 19 years with a female whose death record states that she was Baptist.
- Isaac in 1900 lived with a “wife” who was also from the Anglo-African culture.
- When Zeno finally married, he also chose an Anglo-African and a Protestant minister, not a Catholic priest.
- When Stanville took a second wife in 1906, he, too, chose an Anglo-African wife and a Protestant minister.<sup>98</sup>
- Of all the family members known to have settled in New Orleans, the only one who appears to have been an active Catholic is Arsene, who—unlike Stanville’s daughters—married into a Catholic family.

Given the family’s lifestyle and life choices, the lack of a baptismal record for Stanville’s children born in 1895 and 1897 is entirely compatible with the known facts.

One additional issue has been raised in prior litigation:

***What happened to the three earliest children of Stanville and Julia—  
the three for whom baptismal records exist?***

**MARIE VALMONIA (B. 1888)**

This first daughter is last on record on the 1900 census, living with her father, siblings, grandparents and two cousins, Paul and Bertha (whose parents, Robert and Josette, appear to be dead).<sup>99</sup> Marie Valmonia is cited in that household as “Valmore,” “female,” and “granddaughter.” Her age, like that of the grandson Paul is off by several years.<sup>100</sup> The slurred spelling of her name is consistent with similar misspellings the census taker made for other family members. For example: (a) The name of the granddaughter Bertha, listed last in the household, is written as “Betia;” and (b) The name of Zeno’s daughter next door, Arsene, is written as Alva..... [end of name of blurred].

Valmonia appears to have died between 1901 and 1910. She is not found on the 1910 census, in the family home or elsewhere. No marriage record has been found for her. Stanville’s last appearance in the New Orleans city directories is 1901.<sup>101</sup> In 1906, as noted above, he married in Plaquemines Parish to a woman who, according to the 1910 census of Plaquemines, he had lived with for 6 years<sup>102</sup>—thereby suggesting that Stanville moved his family to Plaquemines at least by 1904. Unlike Orleans Parish, death registrations

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98. Marriage Certificate of “Standville Simons” and Rebecca Bibbs, 27 January 1906, Marriage Book A-1, folio 281, Plaquemines Parish.

99. 1900 U.S. cens., Orleans Par., pop. sch., New Orleans, Precinct 3, ED 137, sheet 19-B, dwell. 414, fam. 441.

100. Paul Elin Sémère, son of Robert William Sémère and Josette Breaux, was born 28 August 1885; he is cited by the 1900 census taker as being born in January 1888. Marie Valmonia, born October 1888 has a guesstimated birth of March 1894.

101. *Soards’s New Orleans City Directory, 1901* (New Orleans: Printed for the compiler, 1901), p. 798.

102. 1910 U.S. cens., Plaquemines Par., pop. sch., 6th Ward, p. 107, dwell. 145, fam. 156, Stanville Simmons.

were not required in Louisiana’s rural parishes in the 1901–10 period. Under the prevailing vital records act, passed in 1896, the local boards outside New Orleans “were authorized but not required to provide for the registration of ... deaths”; and an amendment in 1900 required reporting of deaths only by doctors who may have attended the deceased.<sup>103</sup>

#### AMÉLIE (B. 1890)

As demonstrated on pages 10–14 and 17, this child was one and the same as Lovenia.

#### JOSEPH VALMONT (B. 1892)

Joseph’s absence from the family household on the 1900 census implies, as a matter of course in that era of high child mortality, that he had died. Stanville cannot be placed in the city prior to 1897, and death registrations were not required prior to then in the rural parishes (as noted above).

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. Stanville “Estinville” Sémère is one and the same as Stanville Simmons.
2. The genealogy presented by the Clovis-Julien group is highly deficient, omitting seven legitimate siblings of Stanville and dozens of their legitimate offspring.
3. Arsene Simmons was the daughter of Stanville’s brother Zenon—but she was not Zenon’s *legitimate* daughter.
4. Frances (Simmons) Odom and Amélie Luvenia (Simmons) James, the only two surviving children of Stanville Sémère, were born to his legitimate marriage with Julia Julien and were consistently recognized throughout their lives as his lawful children and his legal heirs.

### ATTACHMENTS:

- Chart 1 ..... The Sémère aka Simmons Family, *ca.* 1820–1920
- Chart 2 ..... Proofs of Legitimacy: Children & Sole Surviving Heirs of Stanville Sémère aka Simmons
- Chart 3 ..... Records Attesting Lack of Legitimate Heir for Zenon “Zeno” Sémère Simmons & Amy Moss
- Table 1 ..... Americanization of Names by Sémère aka Simmons Family
- Table 2 ..... Marital Patterns Found for Children of Narcisse “Nat” and Célèstine Sémère
- Table 3 ..... Analysis of Legitimacy Statements on Pre-1910 Birth & Baptismal Records
- Table 4 ..... Analysis of Marital Statements on All Death Records Presented as Evidence
- Table 5 ..... Analysis of Delays & Legitimacies in Birth Registrations, City of New Orleans, 18 April 1900
- Table 6 ..... Summary: Age Discrepancies in 1869–1920 Records of the Sémère aka Simmons Family
- Table 6-A ..... Age Discrepancies in 1869–1920 Records of the Sémère aka Simmons Family
- Appendix 1 .... The Sémère (aka Simmons) Family: A Genealogical Summary of the Evidence Found To Date. [Not posted online to preserve the privacy of living descendants].

103. Louisiana Historical Records Survey, *Guide to Public Vital Statistics Records in Louisiana*, 3–4.