

## A Family's Journey Across the Caribbean: Family Narrative of the Jean Charles-Lautin Clan

### GENERATION ONE

1. **GUSTAVE<sup>1</sup> JEAN CHARLES** born enslaved on the island of Terre-de-Bas, Les Saintes, Guadeloupe circa 1821,<sup>1</sup> was later manumitted in 1832,<sup>2</sup> and ultimately recognized by his parents in 1843.<sup>3</sup> Gustave Jean Charles first married **FRANÇOISE JACKSON** the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1843 in Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe.<sup>4</sup> His second marriage was to **JULIENNE MALVINA LAUTIN** the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1869 in Vieques, Puerto Rico.<sup>5</sup> Gustave Jean Charles later died in Ponce, Puerto Rico the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1891.<sup>6</sup>

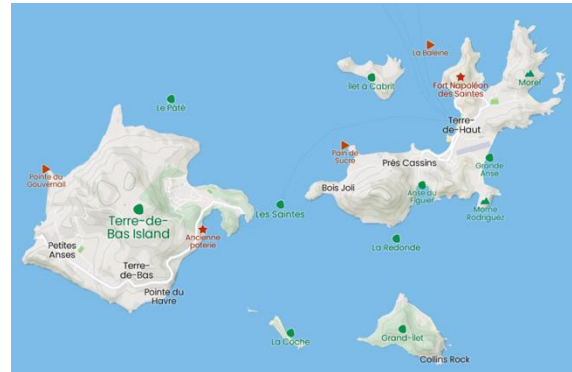


Image 1: “Terre-de-Bas Island Map”, MapCarta  
(<https://mapcarta.com/19502384/Map> : accessed 15 March 2022)

**JULIENNE MALVINA LAUTIN** born enslaved as “Julienne Malvina” in Rivière Salée, Martinique the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1844 was the illegitimate daughter of Eglantine – at the time of her birth, both women belonged to the Lapierre/Forget family and had no surname.<sup>7</sup> Later manumitted in 1848, they received the surname “Lautin”.<sup>8</sup> Julienne Malvina Lautin died in Salinas, Puerto Rico the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1897.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As of March 2022, no birth registration has been found for Gustave Jean Charles given that he was born enslaved. A search has been conducted on the online database ANOM - Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caomec2/>) between 1815-1825 in Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe searching under the indexes for “Chateau”, “Gustave” or “Jean-Charles”.

<sup>2</sup> Conseil privé de Guadeloupe (1826-1904), “Ministère des Colonies. Conseil privé de Guadeloupe : procès verbaux des délibérations (1802-1904),” p. 463, entry 9, Decision of Marie Lucie and her 4 children, 2 October 1832 ; accessed as “Séance du 2 octobre 1832,” browsable images, ANOM - Fonds du Ministère des Colonies (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/xr660zuff.num=20.form=complexe> : accessed 15 March 2022).

<sup>3</sup> État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” image 4, no. 4, Chateau Jean Charles & Marie Lucie, marriage, 4 September 1843; accessed as “Guadeloupe TERRE-DE-BAS (LES SAINTES) 1843,” browsable images, ANOM, (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caomec2/> : accessed 15 March 2022).

<sup>4</sup> État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” images 5-6, no. 7, Gustave Chateau & Françoise Jackson, marriage, 14 November 1843; accessed as “Guadeloupe TERRE-DE-BAS (LES SAINTES) 1843,” browsable images, ANOM, (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caomec2/> : accessed 15 March 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Matrimonios 1844-1920,” p. 209, no. 441, Gustavo Juan Charles & Juliana Malvina Lautin, marriage, 7 September 1869; accessed as “Registros Parroquiales, 1854-1942,” browsable images, FamilySearch, (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog> : accessed 15 March 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1890-1894,” p. 90vt, no. 64, Juan Carlos Gustavo, death, 21 April 1891; accessed as “Puerto Rico, Civil Registry, 1885-2001,” browsable images, Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9100/>: accessed 15 March 2022), search terms: (first & middle name(s), last name, death year) “Juan Carlos”, “Gustavo”, “1891”.

<sup>7</sup> Archive de la Martinique (Rivière-Salée, Martinique), “Naissance 1844,” p. 6, no. 24, Julienne dite Malvina, 18 February 1844; accessed as “Base de données nominative : nouveaux-libres,” browsable images, BNPM, (<http://www.patrimoines-martinique.org/ark:/35569/a011457442275UnGrYX> : accessed 13 December 2012). As of March 2022, links to the original documents are broken given the retirement of Adobe Flash. Screenshot of the birth entry is now privately held by author Luis Ariel Rivera.

<sup>8</sup> For Eglantine’s and Julienne’s freedom, Archive de la Martinique (Rivière Salée, Martinique), “Actes d’individualités 1848,” p. 35-36, no. 141-142, Eglantine Lautin, Julienne Malvina Lautin, 21 December 1848; accessed as “Base de données nominative : nouveaux libes,” browsable images, BNPM (<https://www.patrimoines-martinique.org/ark:/35569/a011288101940GHHzQW> : accessed 17 March 2022). As of March 2022, links to the original documents are broken given the retirement of Adobe Flash. Screenshot of the freedom entries is now privately held by author Luis Ariel Rivera.

<sup>9</sup> Registro Civil (Salinas, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1885-1902,” p. 102, no. 50, Balbina Pérez Glantin, death, 8 April 1897; accessed as “Puerto Rico, Civil Registry, 1885-2001,” browsable images, Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9100/>: accessed 15 March 2022), search terms: (first & middle name(s), last name, death year) “Balbina”, “Pérez”, “1897”.

*Life in the West Indies – Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe*



Image 2: “Slave House and Cooking, Guadeloupe, French West Indies, late 1840s”, *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora* (<http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1361> : accessed 17 March 2022).

Given the unforgiving circumstances of slavery, Gustave Jean Charles’ upbringing is riddled with biographical voids; however, much can still be gleaned about the latter part of his lifetime. Gustave spent his formative years on the island of Terre-de-Bas, an islet belonging to the French territory of Guadeloupe. His mother Marie Lucie was manumitted the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1832 along with her four children.<sup>10</sup> Though not mentioned by name in his mother’s manumission, his mother’s marriage to Chateau Jean Charles confirms that he was one of the four emancipated children. Gustave appeared as one of three children (alongside his siblings Charles and Adélaïde) recognized by their parents Chateau Jean Charles and Marie Lucie on their wedding day, the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1843.<sup>11</sup> The fourth child, Augustine Marie, was not recognized given her death the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1842, one year prior to her parents’ marriage.<sup>12</sup> At this point in time, Gustave appears as: “*âgé de dix-neuf ans, marin*” (aged 19 years old, sailor).<sup>13</sup> Much of Gustave’s life would be commanded by the sea – a common motif in his work and his ultimate immigration

and chosen towns of settlement in Puerto Rico.

Life on Terre-de-Bas appears to have been a bit different from the mainland of Guadeloupe; a mixing between the early European settlers (many from the area of Normandy in France) and the enslaved African population created a distinct base of creole culture and dialect on the island, known as *Saintois*, different from that of Guadeloupe proper.<sup>14</sup> This likely explains why despite his father’s profession as a carpenter and his mother being a seamstress<sup>15</sup>, Gustave was able to obtain work as a sailor and later as a *capitaine au cabotage*<sup>16</sup> (coasting captain) – professions he achieved which were relegated to “lesser” classes such as freed people of color or second-class whites in the West Indies.<sup>17</sup> It also likely explains why despite initially being enslaved, Gustave likely received some sort of education in his youth given that he

<sup>10</sup> Conseil privé de Guadeloupe (1826-1904), “Ministère des Colonies. Conseil privé de Guadeloupe : procès verbaux des délibérations (1802-1904),” p. 463, entry 9, Decision of Marie Lucie and her 4 children, 2 October 1832.

<sup>11</sup> État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” image 4, no. 4, Chateau Jean Charles & Marie Lucie, marriage, 4 September 1843.

<sup>12</sup> État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Décès 1842,” image 3, no. 4, Augustine Marie, death, 27 June 1842; accessed as “Guadeloupe TERRE-DE-BAS (LES SAINTES) 1842,” browsable images, *ANOM*, (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caomec2/> : accessed 15 March 2022).

<sup>13</sup> État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” image 4, no. 4, Chateau Jean Charles & Marie Lucie, marriage, 4 September 1843.

<sup>14</sup> “Terre de Bas des Saintes: Un riche passe,” website, *TerreDeBas* (<https://www.terredebas.com/histoire> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>15</sup> For Chateau Jean Charles’ and Marie Lucie’s profession – État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” image 4, no. 4, Chateau Jean Charles & Marie Lucie, marriage, 4 September 1843.

<sup>16</sup> For definition of cabotage, see *Webster’s Dictionary* (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cabotage> : accessed 17 March 2022).

For Gustave Jean Charles’ profession – État Civil (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe), “Tous Actes 1869,” images 138-39, no. 4, Françoise Jackson, death decree, 12 April 1869; accessed as “Guadeloupe, Basse-Terre, 1869,” browsable images, *ANOM*, (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caomec2/> : accessed 15 March 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Jorge L. Chinea, author, *Race, Colonial Exploitation and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge University Press: 1996), p. 506; *JSTOR* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1008475> : accessed 3 March 2022), online library database.

was able to sign his name during various points of his life.<sup>18</sup> This was an already uncommon ability in the Caribbean and even less common for someone who had been previously enslaved.

Gustave Jean Charles first married Françoise Jackson the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1843 on his native island of Terre-de-Bas. Françoise was a seamstress, a native of Marie-Galante (another island of Guadeloupe), and the illegitimate daughter of Clarice Jackson.<sup>19</sup> In his marriage record, Gustave appeared using the surname “Chaleau”, a homage to his father’s first name instead of using “Jean Charles”. Recently freed and married, Chaleau Jean Charles could now recognize his children and they each decided between using “Chaleau” or “Jean Charles” as a surname. Many slaves in the French Caribbean may have taken their father’s first name or even their mother’s name if they were born out of wedlock and before emancipation.<sup>20</sup> As seen with Chaleau’s own children, this could then be modified as civil statues changed after manumission.

Françoise’s death is shrouded in a bit of mystery given that it was announced via a *jugement* (decree) in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe in 1869, four years after her death the 6<sup>th</sup> December 1865.<sup>21</sup> The decree lists Françoise Jackson as having died from cholera – an epidemic which lasted in Guadeloupe between 1865-1866 and killed 12,328 Guadeloupeans from a population of about 150,000.<sup>22</sup> Also, her husband is no longer an inhabitant of Guadeloupe having been listed as: “*sieur Gustave Jean Charles, capitaine au cabotage, demeurant à Vieques*” (Mister Gustave Jean Charles, coasting captain, living in Vieques).<sup>23</sup> Gustave Jean Charles might have abandoned the island during the cholera epidemic and in the wake of Françoise Jackson’s death forgot to, or was not present to, report it to the local civil registry until it was time for him to re-marry in 1869. This would be the next time Gustave would appear on record – islands away from his hometown.

### Life in the West Indies – Rivière Salée, Martinique

Julienne Malvina Lautin similarly began her life as an enslaved woman on the French island of Martinique. She was born the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1844 as “Julienne Malvina” without a surname, *négresse* (black), the

<sup>18</sup> For Gustave Jean Charles’ signature in his marriage as “Gustave Chaleau” – 1843, État Civil (Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe), “Mariage 1843,” images 5-6, no. 7, Gustave Chaleau & Françoise Jackson, marriage, 14 November 1843.

For Gustave Jean Charles’ signature in his daughter Isabel’s death as “Jean Charles Gustavo” – 1888, Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1887-1889, t. 1-9” p. 259-259vt, no. 586, Isabel Gustavo Gustavo, death, 3 December 1888.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “Researching African Caribbean Family History”, archived webpage, “The clues in surnames”, *BBC* ([https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/next\\_steps/genealogy\\_article\\_01.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/next_steps/genealogy_article_01.shtml) : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>21</sup> État Civil (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe), “Tous Actes 1869,” images 138-39, no. 4, Françoise Jackson, death decree, 12 April 1869.

<sup>22</sup> “Épidémies et quarantaines en Guadeloupe au 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle/Epidemics & Quarantines in 19th Century Guadeloupe”, website, *UWI Alumni Online* (<https://www.uwi.edu/alumnionline/epid-mies-et-quarantaines-en-guadeloupe-au-19-me-si-cle/epidemics-quarantines-19th-century> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>23</sup> État Civil (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe), “Tous Actes 1869,” images 138-39, no. 4, Françoise Jackson, death decree, 12 April 1869.

daughter of Eglantine – a slave registered under the number 192. The declaration of birth was made by a “Madame Lapierre née Forget”.<sup>24</sup> Julienne Malvina, born to an enslaved African mother, belonged as property to Madame Lapierre given that her mother Eglantine herself belonged to this *béké* (a white class descendant of French settlers) woman.<sup>25</sup> However, Madame Lapierre, better known as Alexandrine Forget, would lose her husband Jean Jacques Catherine Lapierre the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1845.<sup>26</sup> His death likely prompted Alexandrine Forget to sell their property in 1847 to her daughter Rose Hélène Lapierre. The plantation, known as *Le Terrier* and located in Rivière Salée, was sold along with various animals, buildings, and nine slaves. Amongst those slaves was Eglantine, 25 years old, and her two-year-old daughter, Julienne Malvina, who together were worth 1,000 francs.<sup>27</sup>



Image 3: “Slave Auction, Martinique, 1826”, *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora* (<http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1885> : accessed 17 March 2022).

Currently it is not known exactly when Eglantine was purchased by the Lapierre family, though likely she was purchased to work in the sugar plantation *Le Terrier* before it fell into ruins. African female slaves were also expected to perform heavy fieldwork tasks such as cultivating and harvesting the sugar cane. 156,572 slaves were brought to Martinique in the nineteenth century and came from areas in Africa such as the Bight of Biafra, West-Central Africa, Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast and Southeast Africa. However, the origin of about 46.2% of enslaved Africans is unknown because likely they had been smuggled onto the island.<sup>28</sup> Currently, Eglantine’s origins in Africa are unknown.

Fortunately for French subjects, slavery came to a halt in 1848 after freedom was pushed forward by French abolitionist Victor Schœlcher.<sup>29</sup> This meant that enslaved Africans like Eglantine and children born in the New World like her daughter Julienne Malvina would now be regarded as French citizens with civil privileges and most importantly a surname. However, surnames were not simply given based on previous owners – these could include “ludicrous or injurious nicknames” along with “anagrams or word puzzles and ‘normal’ names”. These surnames would make up two-thirds of the new French population as 73,000

<sup>24</sup> Archive de la Martinique (Rivière-Salée, Martinique), “Naissance 1844,” p. 6, no. 24, Julienne dite Malvina, 18 February 1844; accessed as “Base de données nominative : nouveaux-libres,” browsable images, *BNPM*, (<http://www.patrimoines-martinique.org/ark:/35569/a011457442275UnGrYX> : accessed 13 December 2012). As of March 2022, links to the original documents are broken given the retirement of Adobe Flash. Screenshot of the birth entry is now privately held by author Luis Ariel Rivera.

<sup>25</sup> Ulrike Schmieder, author, *Histories under Construction: Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (Research Foundation of State University of NY for and on behalf of the Fernand Braudel Center: 2008), p. 223; *JSTOR* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40241715> : accessed 3 March 2022), online library database.

For definition of *béké*, “*Béké*,” website, *AZMartinique* (<https://azmartinique.com/en/all-to-know/lexicon/beke> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>26</sup> État Civil (Rivière Salée, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1845,” images 23, no. 64, Jean Jacques Catherine Lapierre, death, 18 September 1845.

<sup>27</sup> Mad. [Madame] V<sup>e</sup> [veuve] Lapierre- Mad. [Madame] Laroche Garnier, Dépôt des papiers des colonies notariat de Martinique, acte n<sup>o</sup> 86 (13 March 1847); 7 DPPC 3176, Me Louis Adolphe Desloriers Lilette 1843-1856 (Saint-Esprit); Archives Nationales D’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France. Investigation was carried out in person by French genealogist Mickaël Mange.

<sup>28</sup> Ulrike Schmieder, *Histories under Construction: Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, p. 218; 225-226.

<sup>29</sup> “Slavery and the Revolutionary Histories of 1848,” website, *AgeofRevolutions* (<https://ageofrevolutions.com/2016/10/10/slavery-and-the-revolutionary-histories-of-1848/> : accessed 24 April 2022).

new citizens were registered.<sup>30</sup> These registrations would become known as *les actes d'individualités* (acts of individuality). Equally, despite receiving freedom, two-thirds of slaves in the first year of emancipation stayed on the plantation they were previously enslaved.<sup>31</sup> Since emancipation occurred during the harvest season, previous slave owners saw themselves in great need to bring in crops and process their sugar. Therefore, planters allowed the formerly enslaved the ability to keep their cabins, any grounds they had used during slavery, and they were given Saturdays to freely sell their crops in the markets.<sup>32</sup>

Julienne Malvina was registered as a French citizen with her mother Eglantine, a slave from Africa of unknown parentage, and her two-year-old sister Pauline in their *actes d'individualités*. On the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1848, these three women would appear in Rivière Salée, Martinique to register themselves as new citizens and received the surname "Lautin".<sup>33</sup> Currently, there is no connection to their previous slave owners or another theory as to how they were given this surname. As a newly freed woman, Eglantine would have to decide for her and her daughters where to work and where to live. Shortly after emancipation, Eglantine would give birth to a son named Jean Lautin the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1851; she was still listed as living on *l'habitation du sieur Garnier Laroche* (the plantation of mister Garnier Laroche) and still working the land as a *cultivatrice* (farmer).<sup>34</sup> Eglantine would more or less stay on this plantation for about 10 years. By 1858, when her daughter Rose Lautin was born the 10<sup>th</sup> March, they were living on *L'habitation Sainte Catherine Dubocage*.<sup>35</sup> The Garnier-Laroche plantation continued to function after Eglantine Lautin's departure and later became one of the targets during a rebellious attack incited by Eugène Lacaille and other leaders in 1870. Various of the plantation's buildings were burned down such as a steam mill, the rum distillery, the sugar refinery, the main house, the "case à bagasse"<sup>36</sup> (sugarcane pulp storage), the flour hut, as well as a great quantity of syrup, sugar, and furniture.<sup>37</sup>

Avoiding the rebellion altogether, Julienne Malvina Lautin could be found living in Saint-Pierre with the birth of her first son Nicolas Gustave Lautin the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1862.<sup>38</sup> Moving to this town as a free woman of color, Julienne Malvina was able to get a job as a *blanchisseuse* (washerwoman)<sup>39</sup>, one of the common jobs along with seamstress and street vendor that originally were given to enslaved

<sup>30</sup> Guillaume Durand, author, *The Survival of Names of African Origin in Martinique After Emancipation* (Springer: 2001), p. 193; *JSTOR* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/29790658> : accessed 3 March 2022), online library database.

<sup>31</sup> Ulrike Schmieder, *Histories under Construction: Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, p. 232.

<sup>32</sup> Dale Tomich, author, *Visions of Liberty: Martinique in 1848* (Michigan State University Press: 1994), p. 166; *JSTOR* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43007773> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>33</sup> For Eglantine's freedom, Archive de la Martinique (Rivière Salée, Martinique), "Actes d'individualités 1848", p. 35, no. 141, Eglantine Lautin, 21 December 1848; accessed as "Base de données nominative : nouveaux libres," browsable images, *BNPM* (<https://www.patrimoines-martinique.org/ark:/35569/a011288101940GHZQW> : accessed 17 March 2022). As of March 2022, links to the original documents are broken given the retirement of Adobe Flash. Screenshot of the freedom entries is now privately held by author Luis Ariel Rivera.

For Julienne's freedom, Archive de la Martinique (Rivière Salée, Martinique), "Actes d'individualités 1848", p. 35, no. 142, Julienne Malvina Lautin, 21 December 1848.

For Pauline's freedom, Archive de la Martinique (Rivière Salée, Martinique), "Actes d'individualités 1848", p. 35, no. 143, Pauline Lautin, 21 December 1848.

<sup>34</sup> État Civil (Rivière Salée, Martinique), "Tous Actes 1851," image 39, no. 121, Jean Lautin, birth, 3 November 1851.

<sup>35</sup> État Civil (Rivière Salée, Martinique), "Tous Actes 1858," image 14, no. 44, Rose Lautin, birth, 1 April 1858.

<sup>36</sup> For a wider definition of bagasse, see *Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/bagasse> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>37</sup> "Insurrection du Sud (22 septembre 1870: conseil de guerre," *Les Antilles*, p. 4, col. 2 "Incendie Gustave Garnier Laroche"; image copy, *Gallica BnF* (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5470322h/f12.item.textelimage> : accessed 17 March 2022).

<sup>38</sup> État Civil (Saint-Pierre, Martinique), "Tous Actes 1862," image 863, no. 1959, Nicolas Gustave Lautin, birth, 16 December 1862.

<sup>39</sup> For Julienne Malvina's profession – *Ibid.*



Image 4: “Martinique. St Pierre. Jeune mulâtresse, blanchisseuse/ [photogr.] A. S[alles] -- 1889”, *Pinterest* (<https://www.pinterest.fr/pin/295900638021823998/> : accessed 17 March 2022). Photo posted by “Gallica BnF”.

women.<sup>40</sup> Julienne lost her son Nicolas Gustave the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1864.<sup>41</sup> Julienne Malvina had another son shortly after named Marius Alexandre Lautin born the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1865.<sup>42</sup> Sadly, Marius Alexandre died barely at the age of one month the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1866 in Saint-Pierre, Martinique.<sup>43</sup> No father is listed for either Nicholas Gustave Lautin or Marius Alexandre Lautin. Whether it was her job laboring as a washerwoman, lack of nutrition for both parties, or child-related illnesses – Julienne Malvina’s life as a free adult woman was off to a difficult start at the age of 18. Within a year’s time, Julienne Malvina Lautin moved to Vieques, Puerto Rico where her third child was born. Given the short window of time between Marius Alexandre Lautin’s death in January 1866 and her first daughter’s birth in January 1867, it is possible that Julienne Malvina Lautin met Gustave Jean Charles in Saint-Pierre, Martinique, became pregnant around April 1866, and shortly thereafter departed to Puerto Rico to begin a new life.<sup>44</sup> We are not sure what ultimately propelled Gustave Jean Charles and Julienne Malvina Lautin to immigrate, however “[f]or free blacks [,] migration to a nearby colony became a viable vehicle for improving their social and economic conditions”.<sup>45</sup>

### *Life in Puerto Rico – From the island of Vieques to the beaches of Salinas*

Julienne Malvina Lautin gave birth to her first daughter, María Paulina, the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1867 and was baptized the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1867 in Vieques, Puerto Rico.<sup>46</sup> Likely, Julienne Malvina chose her daughter’s name in memory of her own younger sister, Pauline Lautin, who died during childhood in Martinique in 1855.<sup>47</sup> Though Gustave Jean Charles was still religiously married to Françoise Jackson, he recognized María Paulina since she was baptized as an *hija natural reconocida* (illegitimate recognized daughter). In María Paulina’s baptism, names became more Spanish sounding and spellings became warped. Her parents appeared as “Gustavo Juan Charles” and “Juliana Lotin” while her paternal grandparents are listed as “Juan Charles” and “María” and her maternal grandparents as “Cantin Lotin”.<sup>48</sup>

Gustave and Julienne seemed ready to settle down in Puerto Rico as they married the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1869 in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Here, names made a semi-return to their original French as Juliana (a native of

<sup>40</sup> Ulrike Schmieder, *Histories under Construction: Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, p. 227.

<sup>41</sup> État Civil (Saint-Pierre, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1864,” image 271, no. 583, Nicolas Gustave Lautin, death, 24 April 1864. Nicolas died of unknown causes given that records at this time did not record reasons of death.

<sup>42</sup> État Civil (Saint-Pierre, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1865,” image 878, no. 1689, Marius Alexandre Lautin, birth, 19 December 1865.

<sup>43</sup> État Civil (Saint-Pierre, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1866,” image 58, no. 93, Marius Alexandre Lautin, death, 19 January 1866.

<sup>44</sup> “Date Calculator,” website, *TimeandDate* (<https://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html?d1=15&m1=01&y1=&> : accessed 23 April 2022). Month and year estimate based on 40 weeks for a full-term pregnancy.

<sup>45</sup> Jorge L. Chinea, *Race, Colonial Exploitation and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850*, p. 500.

<sup>46</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1844-1897,” p. 141, no. 404. María Paulina Charles, baptism, 14 February 1867; accessed as “Registros Parroquiales, 1854-1942,” browsable images, *FamilySearch*, (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog> : accessed 15 March 2021).

<sup>47</sup> État Civil (Rivière Salée, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1855,” image 31, no. 94, Pauline Lautin, death, 14 July 1855.

<sup>48</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1844-1897,” p. 141, no. 404. María Paulina Charles, baptism, 14 February 1867.

Martinique) appeared as “Juliana Malvina Lautin” and her mother as “Eglantina”. Gustave “Juan Charles” listed his previous marriage to “Francisca Jackson” and mentioned that he was a native of Guadeloupe.<sup>49</sup> Over time the origins of the couple begin to distort as family lore takes over stating that the family came from the island of Saint Thomas over to Puerto Rico.<sup>50</sup> Partly to blame are the records themselves which at times indiscriminately name them as *franceses* (French) regardless of the fact that they were born in the West Indies and not in Europe.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes the records (including civil, religious, and federal census) state other countries such as Saint Thomas, France, or even England as places of origin for the couple.

The sea played an important role in the towns that Gustave Jean Charles and Julienne Malvina Lautin chose to live in. Beginning in Vieques, the family later made its way to Fajardo, Salinas, Santa Isabel, and Ponce – all towns along the eastern and southern coast of Puerto Rico. Many of the *barrios* (neighborhoods) they chose were located near or basically right up against the water, living in barrios named *playa* (beach) in at least three of the towns. This is likely explained by the fact that Gustave Jean Charles was the owner of a *balandra* (sloop/sailboat) named “Cristina Aurora” which was sent into public auction in Fajardo, Puerto Rico in 1877.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, they were likely drawn to the south and the coasts given that by the 1840s, a presence of French subjects can be found in towns like Guayama, Patillas, Salinas, and Ponce owning various properties.<sup>53</sup>

After their wedding in 1869, all of Gustave Jean Charles’ and Julienne Malvina Lautin’s children appear as legitimate. The known children of this couple are as follows:<sup>54</sup>

- 2 i. **MARÍA PAULINA<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1867, baptized the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1867 in Vieques, Puerto Rico<sup>55</sup> and died the 20<sup>th</sup> September 1948 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.<sup>56</sup> She married MANUEL CORREA ORTIZ the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1896 in Salinas, Puerto Rico.<sup>57</sup>
- 3 ii. **TOMÁS OCTAVIO<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1869, baptized the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1870 in Vieques, Puerto Rico<sup>58</sup> and died the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1951 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.<sup>59</sup> He married VALENTINA MALAVÉ RODRÍGUEZ the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1894 in

<sup>49</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Matrimonios 1844-1920,” p. 209, no. 441, Gustavo Juan Charles & Juliana Malvina Lautin, marriage, 7 September 1869.

<sup>50</sup> Sol Ralat, Illinois to Luis Ariel Rivera, e-mail, 28 September 2013, “RE: Charles/Gustavo Family,” author’s files.

<sup>51</sup> Jorge L. China, *Race, Colonial Exploitation and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850*, p. 503.

<sup>52</sup> “Escribanía Pública – Secretaria del Juzgado de Paz de Fajardo,” *Gazeta de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, Puerto Rico), 21 April 1877, page 3, columns 2; image copy, *Library of Congress* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2013201074/> : accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>53</sup> Jorge L. China, *Race, Colonial Exploitation and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850*, p. 508;

<sup>54</sup> For continuity’s sake, all children will be listed with the Spanish convention of using both surnames (paternal, maternal), in this case – Charles Lautin. The surnames’ spellings over time have changed and the children were sometimes born and baptized under the surname “Gustavo” but later went back to using “Charles” in the latter part of their lives. Currently, the family in Puerto Rico uses the surname “Charles”.

<sup>55</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1844-1897,” p. 141, no. 404. María Paulina Charles, baptism, 14 February 1867.

<sup>56</sup> Registro Civil (Santurce [San Juan], Puerto Rico), “Defunciones v. 35-42, 1947-1951,” no. 424, María Paulina Charles, death, 20 September 1948.

<sup>57</sup> Iglesia Católica Nuestra Señora de Monserrate (Salinas, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1854-1906,” p. 89, no. 161, Manuel Correa Ortiz & María Paulina Charles Lotins, marriage, 28 June 1897.

<sup>58</sup> Iglesia Católica Inmaculada Concepción y Apóstol Santiago de Isabel Segunda (Vieques, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1844-1897,” p. 58vt, no. 193, Tomás Octavio Charles, baptism, 20 February 1870.

<sup>59</sup> Registro Civil (Santurce [San Juan], Puerto Rico), “Defunciones v. 35-42, 1947-1951,” no. 495, Tomás Charles Pérez, death, 7 November 1957.

- Ponce, Puerto Rico<sup>60</sup> and later married RAMONA CORTÉS CRUZ about 1918 in Guánica, Puerto Rico.
- 4 iii. **MARIE ALEXANDRINE<sup>2</sup> “AREOPAJITA” JEAN CHARLES**, born the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1878 in Saint Esprit, Martinique<sup>61</sup> and died the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1900 in Ponce, Puerto Rico.<sup>62</sup>
  - 5 iv. **VALENTINA<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born about 1879 either in Martinique or Puerto Rico<sup>63</sup> and died the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1938 in Salinas, Puerto Rico.<sup>64</sup>
  - 6 v. **DIONISIO<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1880 and baptized the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1881 in Fajardo, Puerto Rico.<sup>65</sup>
  - 7 vi. **ALBERTO FERMÍN<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1882, baptized the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1883 in Salinas, Puerto Rico<sup>66</sup> and died the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1953 in Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico.<sup>67</sup> He married MARÍA SIMÁN RODRÍGUEZ the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1902 in Ponce, Puerto Rico.<sup>68</sup>
  - 8 vii. **MARTINA ISABEL<sup>2</sup> CHARLES LAUTIN**, born the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1887 in Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico<sup>69</sup>, she was baptized the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1888 in Ponce, Puerto Rico<sup>70</sup> and died the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1888 in Ponce, Puerto Rico.<sup>71</sup>

Life for the Jean Charles-Lautin clan was undoubtedly a mixed bag of experiences in their new home. To begin with, the family was a free family of color living on an island where slavery still existed until the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1873.<sup>72</sup> Though having attained freedom themselves many years prior to enslaved Puerto Ricans, the family would likely experience colorism and its hardships firsthand. During much of the early 1800s, foreign immigrants of color were frequently detained, arrested or deported.<sup>73</sup> Likely, this was caused by the fact that many immigrants arriving from the West Indies left countries where abolition had already been established and other independence movements were on the rise. This would prompt Spain to

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Also, *FindAGrave*, database and images ([https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133576283/thomas-charles\\_perez](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133576283/thomas-charles_perez) : accessed 18 March 2022), memorial page for Thomas Charles Perez (1870-1951). Find A Grave Memorial no. 133576283, created by “Joe”, citing Puerto Rico Memorial cemetery, Carolinas, Puerto Rico; the accompanying photograph contributed by “Aida Torres”.

<sup>60</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Matrimonios 1892-1896,” no. 424, Tomás Charles Sotin & Valentina Malavé Rodríguez, marriage, 25 June 1894.

<sup>61</sup> État Civil (Saint Esprit, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1878,” image 37, no. 119, Marie Alexandrine Jean Charles, birth, 26 March 1878.

<sup>62</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1900-1926, t. 4P-7P, 1-4 (playa),” p. 9vt, no. 175, Areopajita Gustavo, death, 12 June 1900.

<sup>63</sup> Searches were conducted for Valentina’s birth record for the period covering 1873-1883 in Saint-Esprit, Rivière Salée, Martinique and Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe on ANOM. Searches were also conducted in Vieques’ baptismal records for the period covering 1874-1883.

<sup>64</sup> Registro Civil (Salinas, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1937-1950,” no. 255, Valentina Charles, death, 18 August 1938.

<sup>65</sup> Iglesia Católica Santiago Apóstol (Fajardo, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1860-1890,” p. 148vt, no. 560, Dionisio Gustavo, baptism, 28 March 1881.

<sup>66</sup> Iglesia Católica Nuestra Señora de Monserrat (Salinas, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1854-1906,” p. 214vt, no. 839, Alberto Fermín Gustavo, baptism, 31 December 1883.

<sup>67</sup> Registro Civil (Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1947-1958,” no. 195, Alberto Charles Sotin, death, 9 October 1953.

Also, *FindAGrave*, database and images ([https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133548947/alberto-gustavo-charles\\_sotin](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133548947/alberto-gustavo-charles_sotin) : accessed 18 March 2022), memorial page for Alberto Gustavo Charles Sotin (1888-1953). Find A Grave Memorial no. 13354897, created by “Joe”, citing Puerto Rico Memorial cemetery, Carolinas, Puerto Rico; the accompanying photograph contributed by “Joe”.

<sup>68</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Matrimonios 1895-1906, t. 5-12 (cont.),” p. 15vt, no. 191, Alberto Charles Sotin & María Simán Rodríguez, marriage, 17 July 1902.

<sup>69</sup> Registro Civil (Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico), “Nacimientos 1885-1908,” p. 23-24, no. 253, Martina Isabel Gustavo Pedro, birth, 26 November 1886.

<sup>70</sup> Iglesia Católica Nuestra Señora del Carmen (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Bautismos 1883-1889,” p. 128vt, no. 507, Isabel Gustavo, baptism, 1 January 1888.

<sup>71</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Defunciones 1887-1889, t.1-9,” p. 259-259vt, no. 586, Isabel Gustavo Gustavo, death, 3 December 1888.

<sup>72</sup> “Abolition of Slavery in Puerto Rico,” website, *Library of Congress*, (<https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/slaves.html#:~:text=On%20March%2022%2C%201873%2C%20the,of%20freed%20slaves%20as%20compensation> : accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>73</sup> Jorge L. Chinae, *Race, Colonial Exploitation and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850*, p. 510-12.



repress foreign immigrants in their part of the Caribbean.<sup>74</sup> An arrest would occur in 1886 when Gustave Jean Charles (appearing as Juan Carlos Gustave), Julienne Lautin (appearing as Balbina Loten), and Paulina (appearing as Paulina Gustave) seem to have gotten into a bit of a scuffle. Though unclear why and under what conditions, the family is brought to charges of minor lesions, Gustave and Julienne served days in jail, and they were charged various amounts in the currency of the time, *pesetas*, for their involvement in a felony against Francisco and Gerónimo Rosas presented in the newspaper *Gazeta de Puerto Rico*.<sup>75</sup>

### PROOF SUMMARY – AREOPAJITA CHARLES & MARIE ALEXANDRINE JEAN CHARLES

Despite the couple having lived in Puerto Rico for at least ten years, their third child Marie Alexandrine was born in Saint Esprit, Martinique in 1878. Gustave Jean Charles appears as *maître* (master) *au cabotage* while Julienne Malvina Lautin appears as *blanchisseuse* – professions previously held by both in their respective islands of origin. Despite returning to a French speaking island, Julienne’s last name retains the spelling commonly found in Puerto Rican records as “Lotin”.<sup>76</sup> However, another daughter named “Areopajita” was said to have been born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico around the same year. No death record currently exists for Marie Alexandrine and no birth record can be found for Areopajita – this is likely due to the fact that despite the name difference, both of these daughters were one and the same.



Image 5: Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Nacimientos 1894-1899,” p. 348vt, no. 196, José Laureano Gustavo, birth, 25 September 1897.

- In her son José Laureano Gustavo’s birth, the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1897, Areopajita appears as the declarant of the birth. She mentions she is a native of Fajardo, 18 years old (born circa 1879), and her parents are listed as “Juan Carlos Gustavo” and “Balbina Pérez” (both deceased). José Laureano is born out of wedlock.<sup>77</sup> A look at her signature in the record shows that she was not very sure of her name, exchanging the “e” for an “i” in the first half of her name, the “j” for a “g”, and the “v” for a “b” in Gustavo (this, a common mistake based only on sound giving that the b/v in Spanish have no auditory difference). Misspellings was a common occurrence on the island given the low levels of literacy amongst Puerto Ricans.<sup>78</sup>
- A later registration appears in 1913 attesting to the birth of a son named “José” who was said to have been born the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1895. This son (likely José Laureano himself) was registered by Tomás Charles Lautin, his maternal uncle, seeing as how by this year both of José’s parents were deceased. His parents appear as Pedro Rosado Sierra and Marie Alexandrine Charles Lautin (misspelled as Clotin). The maternal grandparents are listed as “Gustavo Juan Charles” and “Juliana Balbina Clotin”.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> “Providencias judiciales – Don Nicolás S. Arana y Guerrero, Escribano Público y del Juzgado de 1<sup>a</sup> Instancia de la Villa de Guayama y su partido,” *Gazeta de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, Puerto Rico), 20 November 1886, p. 3, col. 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> État Civil (Saint Esprit, Martinique), “Tous Actes 1878,” image 37, no. 119, Marie Alexandrine Jean Charles, birth, 26 March 1878.

<sup>77</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Nacimientos 1894-1899,” p. 348vt, no. 196, José Laureano Gustavo, birth, 25 September 1897.

<sup>78</sup> “Education in Puerto Rico,” *The Journal of Education* 50 (2 November 1899): pg. 286; *JSTOR* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44060976> : accessed 18 March 2022), online library database.

<sup>79</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), “Nacimientos 1902-1924, t. 4-7, 1-4 (Playa),” p. 230, no. 106, José Rosado Charles, birth, 1 August 1913.

- Given that José had lost his mother around the age of 5-7, likely Tomás, as an uncle and the likely father figure, wanted to legitimize José's relation to his father since he was registered as an illegitimate son the first time in 1897. There is a discrepancy in age, a common occurrence on the island. It seems that Tomás played an important role in José's life given that José was living with him in 1910.<sup>80</sup>
- Tomás being the son of two French/Creole speakers likely spoke a variation of one or both languages himself and recognized his younger sister by her official name "Marie Alexandrine" as he was alive, present, and older when she was born in Martinique. This would explain why Tomás lists his sister by her French name in José's recognition record in 1913 versus listing her as "Areopajita".

Given that Marie Alexandrine was born in Martinique but shortly arrived to Puerto Rico around the age of two, she likely went by her nickname of Areopajita for the majority of her life in her new home. Nicknames in Puerto Rico, like in the United States, were and continue to be an important cultural phenomenon that affect how people are known both in life and on paper.

#### PERSERVING MEMORIES – GUSTAVE JEAN CHARLES & JULIENNE MALVINA LAUTIN

Gustave Jean Charles and Julienne Malvina Lautin would die in two separate towns in Puerto Rico, the former in Ponce and the latter in Salinas. Gustave Jean Charles died the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1891 at the age of 70 from cystitis, an inflammation to the bladder causing a urinary tract infection by bacteria.<sup>81</sup> Julienne Malvina Lautin died six years later at the age of 53 on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1897 in Salinas, Puerto Rico from cerebral hemorrhage, a type of stroke caused when an artery in the brain creates localized bleeding in the surrounding tissue.<sup>82</sup>

Despite passing 125-131 years ago respectfully, Gustave and Julienne Malvina's legacy and memory lived on through language, surviving up to three generations of French-speaking family members like their great-grandson Manuel Correa Rivera.<sup>83</sup> Their grandson, Cruz Correa Charles, was referred to by neighbors in Salinas dearly with the term *monsieur* (sir/mister), paying homage to the heritage of his maternal grandparents.<sup>84</sup> Equally, the couple's genetic inheritance is in the DNA carried by their descendants today.

**"LANGUAGE IS THE ROAD MAP OF A CULTURE. IT TELLS YOU WHERE ITS PEOPLE COME FROM AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING."**

- RITA MAE BROWN<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Yauco, Puerto Rico, population schedule, Guánica (Urbano), Enumeration District (ED) 570, sheet 12 (inked), p. 4858 (inked), dwelling 1155, family 119, José Rosado Charles living in Tomás Charles Pérez's household; digital image; Ancestry.com (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7884/> : accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>81</sup> Registro Civil (Ponce, Puerto Rico), "Defunciones 1890-1894," p. 90vt, no. 64, Juan Carlos Gustavo, death, 21 April 1891. For definition of cystitis, see *MayoClinic* (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cystitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20371306> : accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>82</sup> Registro Civil (Salinas, Puerto Rico), "Defunciones 1885-1902," p. 102, no. 50, Balbina Pérez Glantin, death, 8 April 1897. For definition of cerebral hemorrhage, see *WebMD* (<https://www.webmd.com/brain/brain-hemorrhage-bleeding-causes-symptoms-treatments> : accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>83</sup> Personal knowledge of the author based on conversations with brothers Waldemar, César, and Giovannie Correa Ortiz, sons of Manuel Correa Rivera, September 2013.

<sup>84</sup> Modesta Correa Antonetti, recorded interview by Luis Ariel Rivera, mp4, regarding Modesta's father Cruz Correa Charles, August 2015, recording held by author, Stamford, CT, in Puerto Rico – Audios File Folder, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> "Rita Mae Brown > Quotes > Quotable Quotes," website, *GoodReads* (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1216041-language-is-the-road-map-of-a-culture-it-tells> : accessed 19 March 2022).