

1859

Oct. 27

PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet, Jr. in St. Martinville
to his brother, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
Thursday, October 27, 1859

My dear Paul,

I received yesterday your letter of the 16th of this month which gave much pleasure to all of us. I am hurrying to answer to give you news and tell you that the grinding started yesterday. Fire was lit to the furnace for the bagasse (Note: The remnant of the canes after the sugar has been extracted) yesterday morning (Wednesday the 26th) at twenty minutes to ten. We had a good beginning without any trouble nor much upset. It took some time to obtain the first batch which was ready only at six in the evening. The pan is not in order yet. We will have it cleaned before long. Mr. Wallace sent a recipe to remove all sugary crust which accumulated on the pipes. I think I have already told you that our engineer is called Mr. William Wallace. He is a young man who looks like a very good boy. He was sent by Messieurs Leeds.

Last night I was on duty first. Cailler will not come for the grinding. Very pretty sugar was made. They grind stumps from the large vineyard on the other side of the river, which are very short but give a very rich canes' wine. Since yesterday, 16 batches of melted sugar were pulled which cooled off very well and very quickly. They are grinding in the lower section (toward St. Martin) everything is well this morning including the furnace for the remnant canes and all the rest. The short canes give trouble to the mill. They choke it up. It will take two or three more days before we begin with the fine canes. Such are about all the news of the refinery that I can give you at the present time. We are going to speak about something else.

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Papa (Alexander Declouet) wants you to know that he is upset by the fact that you take only two classes. He tells you that if it is too hard for you to learn Latin and Greek you should prepare yourself for the Anglo-Saxon class of the University. He insists that you should take a very complete English course when you go to the University. He is asking Mr. D. (Dinwiddie, principal of Brookland School) to prepare you very well for this class. That is all he wants me to tell you. Yesterday, at the same time as your letter, I received a letter from Alexandre Frere. Tell him that I have not the time to answer him today. It will be for another time.

The letter you wrote to Christine (our sister) gave her a great deal of pleasure. She intends to answer you. Yesterday, Miss Laurent punished both of them. She prevented them from going to the refinery. It did not affect Gabi (Gabrielle, our sister) much. She said "I shall run there another time if I am not allowed to run there now, it will be just the same for me." (Note: This is expressed in the Negro dialect that probably Gabrielle's servants used.)

Your horses are in good condition. Farceur (our dog) is still the same, very flighty. He fights with Roland every day. Cairo is as fat as a thief. He follows me everywhere, like my shadow. Cola, the _____ of Mama's (Louise Benoit Declouet) is very active. He searches every corner, he scratches and sniffs in all the rooms of the house. Sometimes, he fights with Cou-Blanc who cannot stand him. Such are the news I can give you. We kiss you with all our affection. Remember me to the I. V. A. Goodbye, write to us often. Mama asks you to write in French.

Your brother and best friend,

Alexander Declouet, Jr.

Handwritten in French. Original on file in Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, La.