

1860  
June 9

PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.  
St. Martinville, June 9, 1860

My dear Paul,

I received a fairly long time ago your letter of May 17 but as Papa (Alexander Declouet) had written to you at that time, I preferred to wait so that our letters would not reach you at the same time. For some time, we have not heard from Clouet (Alexander, your brother). His last letter was from Nice, I believe. I think that he travels too fast. I fear he does not take the time to see everything he should and take advantage of this trip. You told me in your letter that you have a horrible weather. You are very lucky to have rain, here we burn up. The crops suffer a great deal and for a long time people lack drinking water. During the last few days the manager of the Magill plantation was obliged to transport water from Bayou Teche by cartloads. I believe he even lacked water for his animals but he did this only once as on the same afternoon we had a rather good rain but not enough as its effect did not last very long and we are still wishing for bad weather. Up there, especially, they had less rain than we had, almost nothing since the month of March. This worries Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme, your aunt). She fears her corn crop might be ruined.

Today, Saturday, everyone is free, no school. The Negroes also have a day off. They work on their corn. I am alone in the house, now writing to you while Felix fans me and drives away the flies swarming around as usual and Doudoune suffocates me with her broom. I keep complaining but it does not slow her in her cleaning. Christine and Gabi (your sisters) went to Mrs. Allison on condition they will return for dinner as it is not much fun to have dinner alone. Papa, Miss Laurent and Blanche (your sister) this morning early went to New

1860 Iberia for a visit to the dentist. Miss Laurent and Papa need his attention.  
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(con't.) Blanche accompanied them for the outing.

While writing to you I was interrupted by Cousin's (Charles Henry Lastrapes?) arrival. He is coming to see the work on the railroad at Cote Gelee and at Lafayette. He will leave tomorrow, so you see that he is not losing any time. He brought little Alfred (Lastrapes) to see his parents who, as you can imagine, are deep into desolation and sadness after such a misfortune. (NOTE: Alfred's brother, Joseph Jules Lastrapes, died on May 27, 1860 at the age of 7.)

It is getting late, I am afraid to miss the mail. We will talk about balls and parties when you are among us. You must be beginning to think of your departure for Louisiana. If there is any danger of diseases take care not to stop in New Orleans. Spare us this worry, I beg of you. Aunt Lolotte has been here for several days. She is making mattresses for me and she sends you her regards. Marceline is rather ill right now but I hope to see her recovering very quickly. The doctor is taking care of her. It is surmised that we will have a great deal of sicknesses this year. I hope this rumour is wrong. It is said in St. Martinville that Constance Darby is engaged to Agricole Grevemberg. The latter left for the springs of Virginia. He will accompany his mother up there then will continue his voyage as far as France. The young Tremoulets also left for France but only for a short while. Goodbye, all of us send kisses. Your mother,

Louise Declouet

P. S. I am announcing to you a sad piece of news. Mrs. Florent Porter has a fatal disease. The city doctors don't give her any chance. She does not even have a long time to live according to what your uncle (Jean Baptiste Benoit) and Mimi (Henriette Lebreton Benoit) told us. With all my heart, I pity the family.

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