



Belle London Jefferson was born on August 28, 1888 near Clinton, Louisiana. She and her husband, Alex Jefferson (1885-1971) raised multiple generations of their descendants. Ma Belle and Alex Jefferson were married in 1903 and had four children. The family left Clinton, Louisiana seeking better opportunities. Alex found a job in Des Allemands, LA at Bowie Sawmill. After spending a few years in Des Allemands, the family traveled to New Orleans.

In New Orleans, Ma Belle served as a maid, cook, and a baker. Ma Belle died in April 1971 in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the age of 82, and was buried at Holt Cemetery.

Ma Belle's story is similar to the narratives of many other African Americans who left their plantations to find a better life for their descendants. Use the questions below to reflect on your ancestors' journey.

### **Reflection Questions**

What were some of the most interesting discoveries I learned while listening to this webinar? About the lives of African Americans in Louisiana? About myself? About others?

Ma Belle accomplished many things without being able to read or write. She made sure her descendants received any formal education that was available to them. How can you use that information to inspire others?

How did the webinar help you learn more about the lives of Louisiana's African Americans? What were you able to accomplish in the face of adversity?

Ma Belle's life inspires me to make a better world for my descendants. What are you doing today to improve your community?

Who inspires you? Where did you meet success, and who might benefit most from what you've learned along the way? How can you share this with them?

This is a list of books that helped to shape my research. Of course, this list is not exhaustive, but it's a great start. Feel free to use these to expand your knowledge of African Americans in Louisiana. Remember to share what you've learned with others.

#### Suggested Reading

Michael Twitty. (2018). *The cooking gene: A journey through African American culinary history in the Old South*.

Bernice Bennett. (2019). *Tracing their steps: A memoir ; my journey to find granddaddy's land in Livingston Parish, Louisiana*.

Antoinette Harrell (2019). *African Americans in Tangipahoa and St. Helena Parishes*.

Curtis Johnson. (2012). *Glimpses of black life along Bayou Lafourche: Brief stories of how black people lived, worked, and succeeded during challenging times*.

Gwendolyn Hall. (1995). *Africans in colonial Louisiana: : the development of Afro-Creole culture in the eighteenth century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.