



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum

A Finding Aid to the Labat: A Creole
Legacy Project Records, 2001-2004, in the
Anacostia Community Museum Archives

Katie Seitz

2016



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<http://www.anacostia.si.edu/Collections/ArchiveCollection>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	<i>Labat: A Creole Legacy Project Records</i>
Identifier:	ACMA.06-082
Date:	2001-2004
Extent:	1.31 Linear feet (2 boxes; audiocassettes, videocassettes, floppy disk, CDs)
Creator:	Gordon, Lori K.
Language:	English .
Summary:	The <i>Labat: A Creole Legacy</i> project records, which dates from 2001 to 2004 and measure 1.31 linear feet, contain materials documenting the creation of artist Lori K. Gordon's quilt, titled "Labat: a Creole Legacy," and the life of Celestine Labat. The collection is composed of audiocassettes, videocassettes, floppy disks, CDs, transcripts, newspaper clippings, writings, notes, correspondence, notecards, and postcards.

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The *Labat: A Creole Legacy* project records were donated to the Anacostia Community Museum in 2004 by Lori K. Gordon.

Related Archival Materials

Related material held by the Anacostia Community Museum:

[Lori K. Gordon collection](#)

Other related material:

[Lori K. Gordon website](#)

Processing Information

The collection were processed by volunteer Katie Seitz with the assistance of archivist Jennifer Morris.

Preferred Citation

Labat: A Creole Legacy Project records, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Lori K. Gordon.

Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist to make an appointment: ACMarchives@si.edu.

Conditions Governing Use

The *Labat: A Creole Legacy* project records are the physical property of the Anacostia Community Museum. Literary and copyright belong to Lori K. Gordon or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information contact the Museum Archives.

Biographical Note

Biography of Celestine Labat

Celestine Labat (1898-2002), educator and traveler, was born and raised in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, in a large Creole family. Her mother Leonora Fayard was a homemaker, and her father Joseph Labat, known as "Papa Joe," was a builder and engineer. Celestine Labat's education would have been limited to eighth grade due to racial discrimination, but she moved to Indianapolis and did domestic work in order to finish high school. Upon graduation, she returned to Mississippi and became a secondary school teacher. After a decade of teaching, her desire for higher education prompted a move to Washington, DC, where she attained a bachelor's degree in science during the years of WWII. She continued teaching, moving to San Antonio, Texas, then Los Angeles, California, where she got her master's degree in education at the University of Southern California. She again returned to Mississippi and taught at St. Augustine Seminary for twenty years before retiring at age 72. She remained active until the last years of her life, and at age 102 was the featured speaker at a Hancock County Historical Society luncheon where she met artist Lori K. Gordon. Their collaboration lasted until her death in 2002.

Biography of Lori K. Gordon

Lori K. Gordon (1958-), visual artist, is originally from eastern South Dakota but now makes her home in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Her work reflects her interest in social issues and her environment, such as the "Katrina Collection," in which Gordon made art from found objects after her studio and community were devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Her meeting with Celestine Labat in 2000 was the start of a friendship and collaboration that resulted in the art quilt, "Labat: A Creole Legacy," acquired in 2004 by the Smithsonian institution. Gordon's work spans arts forms including sculpture, collage, and painting, and is in public and private collections around the world. She is also the founder and president of Six Degrees Consortium, a nonprofit organization created to "enable the creation and dissemination of works of art that are socially relevant, timely, build bridges across cultures and that address the issues faced by humans in an ever-shrinking world."

Scope and Contents

The *Labat: A Creole Legacy* project records, 2001-2004, contain material related to the creation of the *Labat: A Creole Legacy* quilt. The quilt, based on the life and family history of Celestine Labat, was created by the artist Lori K. Gordon and acquired by the Smithsonian Institution in 2004.

Series 1: Writings contains correspondence, writings, notes, and speeches by Gordon her life, work, and research on Labat family history, and friendship with Labat.

Series 2: Interview Transcripts consist of transcripts of Gordon's interviews of Labat.

Series 3: Printed Materials consists of newspaper clippings and artwork related to Labat, Gordon, and the quilt.

Series 4: Audiovisual Materials consists of 21 audiocassettes and 4 videocassettes containing interview material.

Series 5: Digital Materials consists of 1 floppy disk and 3 CDs containing images and documents related to creation of the quilt.

Arrangement

Material in the *Labat: A Creole Legacy* project records is arranged into five series by subject and material type. Series 1 through 3 are housed in Box 1, and Series 4 and 5 are housed in Box 2. Where possible, material within series has been arranged by item type and date.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African American families
- African American women
- African American women educators
- African Americans -- Race identity
- Creoles

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Audiocassettes
- CD-ROMs
- Clippings
- Floppy disks
- Oral histories (document genres)
- Postcards
- Transcripts
- VHS (videotape format)
- Videocassettes

Names:

- Labat, Celestine

Geographic Names:

- Mississippi

Container Listing

Series 1: Writings

Series 1: Writings contains writings, correspondence, notes, and speeches by Gordon about her life and work, Labat family history, and her friendship with Labat. The letter to Norman Francis recounts a story told to her by Labat. This series also contains a piece on transcribing and editing the recorded interviews. Material in this series is housed in Box 1.

Box 1, Folder 1	Labat history, circa 2003
Box 1, Folder 2	Letter to Norman Francis from Lori K. Gordon re: Barthe bust of Inez Labat, 2003 April 6
Box 1, Folder 3	Lori K. Gordon artist biography, circa 2004
Box 1, Folder 4	Gordon's remarks on "Labat: A Creole Legacy" quilt and friendship with Labat, circa 2004
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes on the editing of the oral interviews with Celestine Labat, 2004 March 12

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Series 2: Interview Transcripts

Series 2: Interview Transcripts consists of transcripts of Gordon's interviews of Labat. Gordon originally transcribed the interviews by hand, then typed them. This series contains copies of both the handwritten and typed transcripts. Material in this series is housed in Box 1.

Box 1, Folder 6	Oral history of Celestine Labat, handwritten, 1 of 2, 2001-2002
Box 1, Folder 7	Oral history of Celestine Labat, handwritten, 2 of 2, 2001-2002
Box 1, Folder 8	Oral history of Celestine Labat, typed, 2003-2004
Box 1, Folder 9	Stories on "Labat: A Creole Legacy", circa 2003

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Series 3: Printed Materials

Series 3: Printed Materials consists of newspaper clippings and artwork related to Labat, Gordon, and the quilt. Subseries 1: Artwork contains postcards, notecards, and photocopies of details from the Labat quilt and an acrylic painting of Celestine Labat and her father. Subseries 2: Clippings contains newspaper articles about Gordon, Labat, and the quilt, as well as a photocopied article from the early 1940s documenting the murder of a friend, an incident that Labat recalls in her interviews. Material in this series is housed in Box 1.

1: Artwork

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Photocopied portions of quilt with numbered images, circa 2004 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Pack of six notecards with painting of Celestine Labat, her father, and St. Rose de Lima church, circa 2003 |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Two postcards of "Labat: A Creole Legacy" quilt detail, circa 2004 |

2: Clippings

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|------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 13 | "Patchwork of family history," <i>Sun Herald</i> , 2003 February 9 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | "The Life of Miss Celestine Labat," <i>Sea Coast Echo</i> , 2003 February 13 |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | "Celestine Labat, 1898-2003," <i>Sea Coast Echo</i> , 2003 February 20 |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | "'Labat: A Creole Legacy' draws students from along Gulf Coast," <i>Sea Coast Echo</i> , 2003 February 20 |
| Box 1, Folder 17 | "Art abounds at the St. Rose de Lima silent auction for the 77th annual Church Fair," <i>Sea Coast Echo</i> , 2003 |
| Box 1, Folder 18 | "St. Rose to debut new festival poster during Second Saturday," <i>Sea Coast Echo</i> , 2003 September 11 |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | "St. Rose de Lima's Commemorative Fair Poster," <i>Hancock Focus</i> , 2003 September 24 |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | "Deadwood artist to be featured in Smithsonian Institution," <i>Black Hills Pioneer</i> , 2004 May 6 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | "Featured Artist: Lori Gordon," <i>Bay Press</i> , 2004 May 7 |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | "Hancock Quilt Going to Smithsonian," <i>Sun Herald</i> , 2004 May 7 |

- Box 1, Folder 23 "Smithsonian to exhibit 'Labat: A Creole Legacy,'" *Sea Coast Echo*, 2004 May 9
- Box 1, Folder 24 "A stitch in time," *Southern Style*, 2004 May 13
- Box 1, Folder 25 "Labat: A Creole Legacy," *Focus*, 2004 May 19
- Box 1, Folder 26 "Local Ice Man Shoots Negro Employee of Scharff's Grocery," *Sea Coast Echo*, circa 2004

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Series 4: Audiovisual Materials

Series 4: Audiovisual Materials consists of 21 audiocassettes and 4 videocassettes containing recordings of Gordon's interviews with Labat. Originally 25 audiocassettes were recorded, but some sustained damage and were not included with the collection. A record of dates of the original tapes is kept with the accession file. Items in this series are housed in Box 2.

1: Audiocassettes

Box 2	C. Labat oral interview/Dec 14 2001, 2001 December 14
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 14 Dec '01 (original tape only a 60 min tape), 2001 December 14
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 18 Dec 01, 2001 December 18
Box 2	Oral interview w/Celestine Labat 12/22/01, 2001 December 22
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 22 Dec '01 2nd tape, 2001 December 22
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 25 Dec 2001, 2001 December 25
Box 2	Oral interview: C. Labat 23 Dec '01 2nd tape, 2001 December 23
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 30 Dec '01 2nd tape, 2001 December 30
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 22 Jan '02, 2002 January 2
Box 2	C. Labat interview 26 January '02, 2002 January 26
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview/30 Jan 2002, 2002 January 30
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 5 Feb '02, 2002 February 5
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 5 Feb 2002, 2002 February 5
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview/6 Feb '02, 2002 February 6
Box 2	C. Labat - speech to exchange club 7 Feb '02, 2002 February 7
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 24 Feb, 2002 February 24
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 19 April 2002, 2002 April 19
Box 2	C. Labat oral interview 9 May 2002, 2002 May 9

Box 2 C. Labat oral interview 9 May 2002 2nd tape, 2002 May 9

Box 2 C. Labat oral interview 17 Sept '02, 2002 September 17

Box 2 C. Labat oral interview Oct 16, 2002 October 16

2: VHS tapes

Box 2 Interview with Celestine Labat, circa 2002

Box 2 Dec 30-02 1st tape, 2002 December 30

Box 2 12-30-02 #2, 2002 December 30

Box 2 CVL 12-30-02 #3, 2002 December 30

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Series 5: Digital Materials

Series 5: Digital Materials consists of one floppy disk and three CDs containing images of Celestine Labat and the Labat quilt, as well as text documents of stories used for the quilt. Items in this series are housed in Box 2.

1: Compact discs

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| Box 2 | Gordon photos of Celestine Labat 2001-2003, 2001-2003 |
| Box 2 | Labat images for Anacostia, copyright Lori Gordon 2003, 2003 |
| Box 2 | Labat images for Anacostia II, copyright Lori Gordon 2003, 2003
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2: Floppy disk

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|-------|--|
| Box 2 | "Labat: A Creole Legacy" (stories on quilt, complete transcriptions of oral history and related articles) Microsoft Word, circa 2004 |
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