

THE LATE JUDGE B. A. MARTEL of St. Martinsville, La. (The Times-Picayune, New Orleans, LA, October 19, 1887)

The subject of this sketch, the Hon. B. A. Martel, whose death was announced on the 5th inst., [abbreviation for *instante mense* meaning date of the current month] was born in the parish of St. Martin in this state on the 8th of March, 1819. His father Balthazar



Barthelemy Amede [e] Martel (1819-1887)

Martel, was a Creole of St. Domingo, and was one of the few gallant and brave men who escaped from that unhappy island during the revolution provoked by Toussant L'Ouverture (1), Desaline, Ringo and others. Balthazar Martel was then a young man and settled in the Attakapas, where he married Miss Emilie [Catherine Eleonor Chachere], daughter of Louis Chachere [Beaurepaire Prosper Chachere & Eugenie Alexandrine Lavergne] of St. Landry. Of this marriage there were six children. B. A. Martel being the fourth. In 1831 the family moved from St. Martinville to St. Landry, where the father of young Martel died of yellow fever in 1850. [Death year was difficult to read. Murphy Miller research supports death on January 12, 1838. Moreover, B. A. Martel was the fifth of nine children].

Young Amedee, although not the oldest son, took upon himself the care of his mother and three sisters; and in doing this the noble youth toiled with a perseverance and determination that outlined his future career. By various kinds of labor and skill he soon succeeded in placing his mother and sisters in a condition of comparative ease and he applied himself to the study of the civil law. For some time he was the pupil and protégé of the celebrated [Gustave Schmidt](#) of the New Orleans bar. Martel was admitted to practice in New Orleans and such was his desire to perfect himself in the knowledge of his profession that he sailed for France where he prosecuted his studies in the [University of Toulouse](#) until 1849. He then returned to his native home.

Being in France during the revolution of 1848, he learned much from the scenes enacted in his presence and he soon became familiar with the national character of the French people. This knowledge served him usefully on many trying occasions in after life. Having established himself at Opelousas soon after his return, he began the practice of his profession in earnest and was very successful, although he often met with unexpected opposition from some of the older members of that bar. But when these gentlemen thoroughly understood the ardor and warmth of his generous nature they regretted their former conduct toward him and even afterward became his personal friends. His industry and close application to business soon gained for him very many friends, and in 1854 he was elected to the state senate where he served with distinction until 1856. He was then elected judge of the Fifteenth judicial district, which comprised

the territory of St. Landry, Lafayette, Vermillion, Calcasieu, Cameron and Acadia. Nowhere in the history of the profession is found a judge more determined to enforce the duties of his office.

The following proclamation will exemplify this assertion:

"The Laws of the Country must be sustained. Law-abiding Citizens of Calcasieu: I am in possession of reliable information that threats have been made and are in circulation, that the approaching term of your district court on next Monday is to be arrested by violence against your district judge on his way to Lake Charles."

"Now, therefore, this is to call on you to revindicate your rights and to stand by the laws and the officers whose duty it is to administer them. Let it be proclaimed at once by all the good people of your parish from your domestic roots to the sanctuary of your courthouse, that the law shall and must prevail from this time forward though the heavens fall."

"As to me, I know that I shall do my duty at all hazards."

"B. A. Martel,"

"Judge Fifteenth Judicial District"

"July 5 1859" [difficult to read date]

In the discharge of his duties he feared no man. The terror of Calcasieu and the outlaws of that epoch felt his power and were by him made to succumb and to respect the laws of Louisiana like other men. It is proverbial and it is a matter of fact, that his decisions as judge have never been disturbed by the supreme court except in two or three instances, and then only by modification. He held the judicial helm until the outbreak of the war.

In the strife for succession, Judge Martel took no part, except to prove by demonstrative argument the folly and danger of such a step and the terrible vicissitudes that would necessarily follow such political imprudence. Although a strong unionist he loved his native south, and especially his own Louisiana. He loved it too well to stand idly by and see the helpless wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of the brave fellows who were far, far away battling for their homes, insulted and plundered by the rabble jayhawkers of the Attakapas. He at once placed himself at the head of his company of sturdy reserves and in a very short while the country was rid of the last Jawhawker, and the homes of the helpless were no longer terrorized. Having taken up the sword he laid it aside only when the trumpet of peace declared that the struggle was over.

He now resumed his practice with wonderful success and won very many cases, both civil and criminal, which the entire bar considered absolutely hopeless. Remembering his earlier days and the kindness received at the hands of the New Orleans bar, especially his protector, Hon. [Gustave Schmidt](#), Martel took under his care Pecora, who was in due time admitted to practice law. Pecora soon laid by his "cat skin" and is now famous among the detectives of New Orleans. He next took into his office a youth name Linny Hardy, who became one of the brightest lights of the profession. Hardy was, while a law partner of Judge Martel, elected secretary of state. The late judge of the Thirteenth district, Geo. W. Hudspeth, was another youth cared for by him. When Hudspeth took

the bench about eight years ago, Judge Martel's last case, a few months ago, was an indictment for murder made against two brothers. They were acquitted.

Whilst the family resided at St. Martins young Martel had among his dearest playmates Alcibiades De Blanc (2), Edward Simon, Desaline and Mozart Bryant and Valisin Fournette, all of whom he loved tenderly all his life. Whilst very ill and up to the day of his death, he spoke in the kindest terms, with great emotion and often with tears of the many virtues of his old and tried friend, General Alcibiades De Blanc. During his last illness Judge Martel was kindly visited by Ex-Governor Nicholls. Generals Robert Perry (3), Allen Thomas (4) and all the members of the Opelousas bar, all of whom he was most happy to see. Having afterwards learned that Governor Nicholls spoke of him in connection with General Alcibiades De Blanc, he raised his hand to his brow to cover the emotion and said, "It makes me very happy to know that Governor Nicholis has been so kind as to associate m name with that of such a great and good man."

During the whole of Judge Martel's life he was noted for his firm adhesion to the principles of the Democratic party. Whenever he led his party he was sure of success.

Being a noted leader he despised anything like double-faced Democracy. Brave and fearless in politics as in manhood, he loved plain sailing, honesty of purpose being his unerring compass. His political coat was never turned, but in the hour of need was always pulled off for the honest fray. The Democracy of St. Landry can well mourn the loss of a Martel.

Being poor in his youth his heart warmed to those whose days began as his days did and his office, his home and his purse were ever open to them. Indeed, he lived to see many rich fruits of his generosity. To the widow and the orphan Judge Martel was ever known to render relief and fatherly protection. In all matters of charity, he was exemplary.

He was singularly remarkable for his love of children. His great delight was in pleasing them whenever he could. He was known to spend many dollars in taking them to all kinds of places of amusement. On Mardi Gras and at Christmas he was the idol of the little ones. This, as well as his other virtues, gained love, affection and esteem, all of which was clearly shown at his burial. His last breath bid love and devotion to all his friends and acquaintances.

Purchase [Martel Family of Louisiana](#). See Lulu.com

Murphy Miller Comment.

Judge B. A. Martel was a Unionist, i.e. not a Confederate sympathizer, yet the people mentioned as his close friends were Jean Maximilien Alcibiades Derneville DeBlanc, Allen Thomas and Judge Robert Samuel Perry, Jr. all who served in the Confederate Army.

The following from Wikipedia.com:

(1) Toussaint L'Ouverture, Toussaint-Louverture, Toussaint Bréda, and nicknamed the "Napoléon Noir" (Black Napoleon), was the leader of the Haitian Revolution. His

military genius and political acumen transformed an entire society of slaves into the independent state of Haiti. The success of the Haitian Revolution shook the institution of slavery throughout the New World.

Toussaint Louverture began his military career as a leader of the 1791 slave rebellion in the French colony of Saint-Domingue; he was by then a free black man. Initially allied with the Spaniards of neighboring Santo Domingo, Toussaint switched allegiance to the French when they abolished slavery. He gradually established control over the whole island and used political and military tactics to gain dominance over his rivals. Throughout his years in power, he worked to improve the economy and security of Saint-Domingue. He restored the plantation system using paid labour, negotiated trade treaties with Britain and the United States, and maintained a large and well-disciplined army.

In 1801 he promulgated an autonomist constitution for the colony, with himself as governor for life. In 1802 he was forced to resign by forces sent by Napoleon Bonaparte to restore French authority in the former colony. He was deported to France, where he died in 1803. The Haitian Revolution continued under his lieutenant, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared independence in early 1804. The French had lost two-thirds of forces sent to the island in an attempt to suppress the revolution; most died of yellow fever.

(2) Jean Maximilien Alcibiades Derneville DeBlanc (September 16, 1821- November 8, 1883) was a lawyer and state legislator in Louisiana. He served as a colonel for the Confederate army during the American Civil War. Afterward, he founded the Knights of the White Camellia, a white insurgent militia that operated from 1867-69 to suppress freedmen's voting, disrupt Republican Party political organizing and try to regain political control of the state government in the 1868 election. A Congressional investigation overturned 1868 election results in Louisiana.

But DeBlanc continued to oppose the Reconstruction effort; he was influential in commanding 600 men to oppose the disputed election of Governor William Pitt Kellogg in 1874 and try to seat the Democrats. He was briefly arrested and held by U.S. Marshals. In 1876 he was appointed by Democratic governor

(3) Robert Samuel Perry (Jr.) was the son of Robert Samuel Perry and Ezemily Booth. In 1870 (in St. Martinsville, LA) he married Marie Antionette "Bertha" Gary (1848 -1878). She was the daughter of Pierre Gary and Helene Briant. Her family lived in St. Martinsville, LA, so it's likely she was buried there. Robert and Bertha were the parents of three children: Bertha, Lelia (who married Eugene Martinez) and Joseph Robert.

Robert received the best education the schools of Louisiana afforded, and subsequently graduated from Kentucky Military Institute, at the age of 19 years. After completing his literary education, he entered the law school at the University of Louisville, where he took a course of lectures, and afterward entered a law office in Anderson, TX, where he pursued the study of law for about a year. He never practiced there, however, and

returned shortly afterward to Vermilion Parish, where he remained until the Civil War broke out.

Robert enlisted as a private in Company C, of the Eighth Louisiana Regiment, and in August of that year was made first lieutenant. He served during the whole war in the Army of Northern Virginia. Nov. 7, 1863, he was captured at Rappahannock, and held prisoner at Johnson Island for nineteen months, where he was at the close of the war.

In 1866, he moved to St. Martin Parish and then to Iberia in 1871. In 1879 he was elected a member of the State Senate, and served until 1884. He introduced the first bill providing for the regulation of railroads in Louisiana. In 1888 he was elected by the Legislature Judge of the court of Appeals of the Third Circuit of Louisiana.

After his wife Bertha died, he remarried Camille Vedrines of New Iberia on Jan. 1, 1883. Camille died the following October. The Confederate Museum at Lee Circle in New Orleans has a daguerreotype portrait of Robert in uniform.

Judge Perry entered the Confederate army in 1861 as adjutant of the 8th La. Regt., and served with marked distinction throughout the war, in which the Louisiana brigade took a most active part in Virginia where they formed a part of Stonewall Jackson's "foot cavalry" under the immortal Lee, in the famous Valley campaign.

(4) Allen Thomas (December 14, 1830 - December 3, 1907) was a Confederate States Army brigadier general during the American Civil War (Civil War). He was born in Howard County, Maryland and became a lawyer but he moved to Louisiana in the later 1850s and became a planter and colonel in the Louisiana militia. After the war, he was a planter, Presidential elector in 1872 and 1880, professor of agriculture at Louisiana State University and coiner at the United States Mint at New Orleans, Louisiana. He moved to Florida in 1889. Between 1894 and 1897, he was United States Minister to Venezuela. He moved to Mississippi in 1907 and died there in that year. He was buried at Donaldsonville, Louisiana.