

Document #1728-07-08-03 – Biron Goes *Marron*

K4BL Abstract: In 1726, Biron of the Bambara nation arrived in Louisiana from Senegambia on the ship Aurora. For the next two years, he frequently resisted his enslavement. When he ran away in 1728, he was pursued by his enslaver, Jean Soubaigne, who almost killed him while trying to recapture him.

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LHC Card:

#327

Year 1728

July 8

LHC Abstract: Declaration of Sieur Soubaigne against Biron, his fugitive slave, relating the manner of his flight and capture.

Metadata:

Record ID - 295

Document ID - d0295

Filing Date - 1728-07-08

Full Index # - 1728-07-08-03

Doc Type - Judicial Acts, Criminal Cases/Acts, Declaration

Origin - New Orleans, Province of Louisiana

Language - French

Location - Louisiana Historical Center

Source - French Superior Council

LHQ - n/a

Names: Black - (Soubaigne), Biron; Biron of the Bambara nation; “des autres nègres”; “un nègre”

Names: White - Soubaigne, M.; Soubaigne, Jean

Names: Native - n/a

Keywords - fugitivity, la traversée, marronage, Middle Passage, resistance, seizure, violence

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Transcription (French, diplomatic)	Translation (English, modern)
[feuille 1 recto] [digital 2]	[page #1] [digital 2]
[Marginalia:]	[Marginal note:]
8 Juillet 1728	July 8, 1728
Declaration et Plainte par Le S. ^r Soubaigne Contre Biron negre	Declaration and Complaint by The <i>Sieur</i> Soubaigne Against Biron, <i>nègre</i>
[Corps:]	[Body:]
N. ^o 327	No. 327
Est Comparu au greffe du Conseil Superieur de la province de la Louisianne S. ^r Jean Soubaigne hab. ^{[itan]t} dem. ^{[euran]t} a Chantilly le quel nous a dis et declaré qu'il a un negre nommé Biron provenant de la cargraison du V. ^{[aïsse]au} L'aurore, ⁱ le quel a fait plusieurs fais le maron et entre autre hyer a midy Il ____ Sabsenta, et le declarant ayant été avertis par ____ Ses autres negres decet abSence, Il courut apres et la'yant rincontré presque a moitié chemin de cette rille assis dans les Cannes, et l'ayant apercus jl Sen fuit dans la profondeur dubois, et layant appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fusil pour létonner Seulement et lo'bliger a S ^e rendr ^e	Having appeared before the notary of the Superior Council of the Province of Louisiana, <i>Sieur</i> Jean Soubaigne, <i>habitant</i> living at Gentilly, ⁱⁱ said and declared to us that he has a <i>nègre</i> named Biron, obtained from the cargo of the ship, the Aurora, who has often gone maroon, among them yesterday at midday. He [Biron] was absent, and the declarant, being warned by his other <i>nègres</i> of this absence, he ran after [him], and having met him almost halfway to this city sitting in the canefield, and after seeing him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to come [return]

ce quil ne Voulu faire, au contraire jl courut ____
 encore plus fort, le declarant ayant fait un ____
 circuit dans le bois le trouva par terre et lorsqu'il
 lapercut jl Sesauva encore et encourageant jl ____
 trouva une Canne qui le fis tomber par terre,
 le declarant pour le'mpescher de Serelever
 le Coucha enjoüe et luy dis ques'jl remuoit
 qu'il estoit mort cela obligea le^{d[it]} Negre
 de Se Rendre avec luy a la maison, et y'etant
 le declarant appella un Negre pour metre
 lemaron aux fers jl Sauta sur son fuss'il ____
 Du que Il Se Rendit le maitre, le declarant
 ~

[f. 1 verso] [dig.3]

tenant Saisir Son fusjl et le negre, en attendant
 le Secour de Ses autres negres jl luy osta de
 crainte qu'il ne tira Sur luy dont et de quoy
 Il fait la presente declaration fait a
 La N^{[ouve]]le} orleans le huitieme Juillet mil
 Sept Cent Vingt huit, et a Signé

[Signé:] Soubaigne

to him, he [Soubaigne] fired a shot at him [Biron],
 just to shock him and force him to surrender,
 which he did not want to do. On the contrary, he
 [Biron] ran
 again even faster. The declarant, after having made
 a lap around the woods, found him on the ground,
 and when he [Biron]
 saw him, he ran away again, and while running he
 found a reed [with his foot] that made him fall to
 the ground [again].
 The declarant, to prevent him from getting up,
 took aim at him and told him that if he moved
 again he was dead. That obliged the said *nègre*
 to return with him to the house, and while there
 the declarant called a[nother] *nègre* to put
 the maroon in irons. He [Biron] moved quickly at
 his [Soubaigne's] gun [grabbing it]
 at which [time] he [Biron] made himself [his]
 master. The declarant,
 ~

[p. #2] [dig.3]

holding his gun at the *nègre*, while waiting
 for help from his other *nègres*, left from him
 lest he shoot him [Biron], of whom and of what
 he [Soubaigne] makes the present declaration. [It
 was] done at
 New Orleans [on] July 8th, one-thousand
 seven-hundred twenty-eight, and signed,

[Signed:] [Jean] Soubaigne

Please note that what appear to be typos (missing spaces, abbreviations, misspellings, strikeouts, superscript) appear in the original manuscript, but are corrected in the more modernized translation. For more on our editorial practices see [insert xxx link here].

i. According to historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, two slave ships called *l'Aurore* arrived in French-controlled Louisiana prior to 1728. The first acquired captives at Ouidah, in the Bight of Benin, during the fall of 1718. When that ship reached Louisiana in June of 1719, it became the first transatlantic slave voyage to arrive in the colony. The second *l'Aurore* voyage reached Louisiana in March of 1726, with captives from the Senegambia region of West Africa. Both ships stopped in Grenada to restock supplies en route to Louisiana. In the documents, Biron was identified as Bambara and unable to speak any French. These details make it likely that Biron arrived on the second *l'Aurore* voyage in 1726, two years prior to the creation of these records. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 381-397.

ii. Chantilly is the present-day neighborhood of Gentilly nearest to Bayou St. John (St. Jean). Before European intrusion, Bayou St. John was called Bayou Choupik, the Choctaw word for catfish. In modern Louisiana Creole and in Cajun French, the word is retained as *choupique*, meaning mudfish.