

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### **Lincoln Law and Loving Laure**

Robert Todd Lincoln (1843-1926) was the first son of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Ann Todd and the only one to reach adulthood. Like his father he became an attorney, having been admitted to the Illinois bar in 1867. His life was a successful one, serving as Secretary of War for two Presidents and Ambassador to Great Britain for another. He was also General Counsel and later Chairman of the Board of the Pullman Palace Car Company.

But his life was also filled with strange coincidences. The night his father was shot in Ford's Theater, he was invited to join his parents there for the evening, but declined. President Garfield invited him to an event in 1881 at a Washington, D. C., train station where the President was fatally shot. Twenty years later McKinley invited Robert Lincoln to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, where he too was assassinated. Robert Lincoln didn't actually witness any of these shootings, but after McKinley's death he announced he would accept no further Presidential invitations. Another odd coincidence was that Edwin Booth, famous actor and brother of his father's assassin, once saved Robert Lincoln from serious injury or death at a railroad station in New Jersey.

Another occurrence was not so strange as it was charmingly romantic. A young attorney (born in Clarksville, Tennessee), who held a law degree from Lake Forest University, Chicago, was once in the employ of Robert Todd Lincoln's law firm. The young man, John Virgil Dugan, left Illinois for New Orleans in 1902 to investigate a piano company that was not performing up to par. He immediately and eagerly went to work to see why the company was having financial difficulties. But his visit to this new and exciting city was not all work and no play, for he received an invitation to his first New Orleans Carnival Ball. And it was there that he first set eyes on the young and beautiful Laure Jaubert. After meeting her he knew that his life would be changed forever.

Mr. Fortuné A. Jaubert was born in 1846 in Barcelonnette, France, a town surrounded by snow-covered mountains in the Alps of Haute Provence. As the father of John Dugan's love interest, he was visited by the enamored suitor at his place of business, Jaubert Brothers Dry Goods on Magazine Street. Dugan introduced himself and politely asked Mr. Jaubert if he could have his permission to court his daughter, Laure.

Mr. Jaubert replied, "Mais non. Quite impossible! Why, Monsieur Dugan, you don't even speak French."



*Caricature of John V. Dugan,  
Patrick's Club Men of New Orleans, 1917*

The Gaelic-Gallic impasse had young Dugan at first dejected but later empowered once he envisioned the solution. He signed up for French

lessons and after three months revisited Magazine Street. This time the greeting was "Bon jour, Monsieur Jaubert." This salutation was followed by an adequate conversation in French such that the previously reluctant father gladly relented and agreed to a proper courtship. John and Laure were married in 1904, and Dugan decided that he should stay in New Orleans and run the piano company. In 1907, he organized the New Orleans Philharmonic Society and for two years served as its president. The Cable Piano Co. was incorporated in 1909 with Mr. Dugan as president. In 1913, the firm became the Dugan Piano Co. All lived happily ever after, at least until 1916.

**A prominent social event of the past week was the marriage of Miss Laure Angeline Jaubert to Mr. John Virgil Dugan, which was celebrated on Tuesday evening, June 7, at the St. Louis Cathedral, in the presence of a very large gathering of friends and relatives. Palms were grouped**

*Times-Picayune article of June 12, 1904*

On September 14th of that year, a crazed streetcar passenger, Seymour Clay, ran amuck slashing the conductor three times with a knife. It started with a dispute over a transfer in a Napoleon Avenue car at Dryades. Clay jumped from the car and ran to his house to procure a loaded Winchester rifle with which he shot and wounded four people. Another person was even less fortunate. Fortuné Jaubert was riding in his automobile with his wife, daughter (Mrs. Albert Clerc) and granddaughter, Noelie Clerc. While proceeding up St. Charles Avenue a high caliber bullet from Clay's rifle entered Mr. Jaubert's breast as he crossed Valmont Street. Seated in the tonneau of his vehicle, he slumped forward against the driver's seat. His family hastened to Hotel Dieu, but Mr. Jaubert was dead when they lifted him from the car. He was 69 years old. Due to senseless violence a prominent citizen was gone, a man who gave a younger man a second chance at true love. "Merci, Monsieur Jaubert."

## **Body of Fortune Jaubert Interred at Metairie Cemetery.**

The funeral services for Fortune Jaubert, local wholesale merchant, who was killed Wednesday night by a stray bullet from the rifle of the fugitive negro, Seymour Clay, were conducted Friday morning at 10 o'clock at St. Alphonsus' Church. The body was buried in Metairie Cemetery. Father Weldon praised the deceased highly in the funeral sermon.

Mr. Jaubert was born in Bureslonnette, France, seventy years ago, but he came to New Orleans at the age of 20 and entered the commercial field. He was president of the Dugan Piano Company and had built up one of the largest wholesale dry goods establishments in the city.

*Fortuné Jaubert's funeral announcement, September 17, 1916*

P. S. Major Lemuel L. Lincoln was a Confederate veteran and commercial editor of the *Times-Democrat* of New Orleans. His son, Rixford Lincoln (attorney, journalist and teacher), served as an usher in the wedding of Laure Jaubert and John Virgil Dugan, who once worked for the son of Abraham Lincoln.

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