Theophile Thomas Allain [T.T. Allain] was born on October 1, 1846 on the Australian Plantation Parish of West Baton Rouge owned by a wealthy white man, Sosthene Allain. His mother, “a pretty brown woman,” possessing all the taste and attractions found among those of more fortunate circumstances than falls to the lot of a slave, attracted the affection of her master, a millionaire of culture, who was the father of her son. Mr. Sosthene Allain, in the prime of life, was surrounded by all the comforts which taste, and princely income can give.

In 1856 Sosthene sent for his son to join him in France, where he witnessed the christening of the prince imperial at Notre-Dame. They journeyed also to Spain and England. Returning to the United States in 1859, he entered school under a Professor Abadie in New Orleans. In 1868 he enrolled in a private school in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Later he owned a grocery business in West Baton Rouge Parish and remained until 1873, when he invested largely in sugar and rice cultivation. For twenty years he had been a successful shipper of sugar, syrup, molasses and rice, and every day brought him in business contacts with the leading commercial men of the South. He had 790 acres worth $15,000, worked thirty-five laborers, that produced 7000 hogsheads of sugar, 4000 gallons of molasses, and other produce worth 14,400 in 1870.

As a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives from the 14th District, in 1874 T.T. Allain helped obtain the passage of the Funding Act, which made the state liable for an annual interest on its funded debt. In 1872 he began a political career that lasted until 1890. Outside the legislature he supported the abortive unification effort of 1873, designed to remove race as an issue in Reconstruction politics in Louisiana. After two terms in the House, Allain represented the 14th District in the state Senate (1876-1880), even though the last of the federal troops were withdrawn in 1877. He served again in the House from 1881-1890.

T.T. Allain was a strong advocate of popular education and was second to no man in the State when it came to educational matters for the colored people. He was the first man after the war to organize public schools in West Baton Rouge Parish for both the white and colored children.

As a member of the Louisiana Constitutional Convention (1879), one of his more significant acts was his co-sponsorship, of the bill which, in 1880, resulted in an institution "for the education of persons of color," the establishment of Southern University. He was also a member of the first Board of Trustees for Southern University. Three colleges or universities all largely elementary and high schools, - Leland, Straight, and New Orleans were established in the city of New Orleans in 1869.
In 1882, the Republican Executive and Financial Committee and other organizations sent him as one of two spokesmen to urge action by the federal government to improve the levees of the Mississippi River.

In 1886, Theophile Allain introduced a bill in the state legislature for an appropriation of $20,000 (of which $14,000 was authorized) for the purpose of erecting the College buildings of the "Southern University" in New Orleans, later, moved to Scotlandville, Louisiana in 1914.

On January 27, 1887 he proposed to the Farmers’ State Association a resolution to recommend the passage by the Legislature of an industrial school for colored people. He succeeded in having the four institutions in the city of New Orleans (Leland, Straight, New Orleans and Southern) designated as repositories of public records.

Theophile Allain, was a man of considerable learning and an effective speaker. He was also a fine example of those “Colored Creoles” of Louisiana, speaking French fluently. Although his family of six children were Catholic, they attended Straight University, a non-denominational school.

The “T. T. Allain Building” on Southern's campus is named in his honor.

Blassingame, John W.  **Black New Orleans.**  Chicago, University of Chicago Press [1973].


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