



Baroness de Pontalba

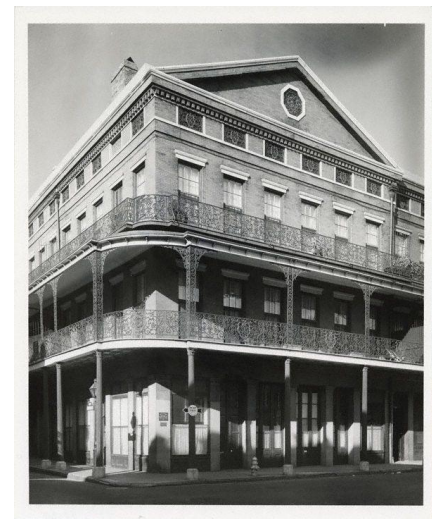
Coloring Page

The Baroness Micaela Almonester de Pontalba (1795–1874) shaped one of the most iconic sites in the city of New Orleans—Jackson Square. Her efforts helped transform a muddy parade ground to the beautiful, vibrant square visitors see today.

Micaela Almonester was born in New Orleans, but moved to Paris after marrying her cousin, Xavier Celestin de Pontalba, at the age of 15. Her marriage ended dramatically after her father-in-law, the Baron Joseph Delfau de Pontalba, attempted to take her life and then took his own. She inherited the title of Baroness, separated from her husband, and a dozen years later returned to New Orleans. She planned a grand project for her properties in the French Quarter.

The Baroness designed and financed the Upper and Lower Pontalba Buildings, which face Jackson Square on two sides, along St. Ann and St. Peter streets. Constructed between 1849 and 1851, the buildings featured retail space on the ground floor and fashionable townhouses above. The intricate cast ironwork on the buildings' balconies helped spark a trend that spread throughout the French Quarter in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Pontalba Buildings were part of the revitalization of the whole square. In 1847 the Cabildo and the Presbytère were renovated to add third floors, mansard roofs, and cupolas. As the Pontalba Buildings went up, St. Louis Cathedral was rebuilt to match their scale and grandeur. The Baroness played a role in designing the landscaped gardens at the center of the square. The Baroness returned to Paris, but left behind an enduring mark on the city of New Orleans.



Lower Pontalba Building
Frances Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1938
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Friends of the Cabildo
1981.132.028

On the following page is a copy of the portrait *Baroness de Pontalba* (ca. 1921), painted by Frank Schneider after a miniature portrait by Elise A. Deharme. Add your own color!

Plan a visit to the 1850 House to learn more about the Pontalba Buildings and the Baroness de Pontalba's personal history.



Baroness de Pontalba (converted to a line drawing)

Frank Schneider, after Elise A. Deharme, ca. 1921

Oil on canvas

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