

# Etienne de Boré's Sugar Kettle: A sweet chemical engineering story by Louis Joseph Thibodeaux

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about him to see the issue of the experiment in which only he could be more deeply concerned than they. In the whole picturesque history of the Louisiana Creoles few scenes offer so striking a subject for the painter as that ordered in this episode: the dark sugarhouse; the battery of huge caldrons, with their yellow juice boiling like a sea, half-hidden in clouds of steam; the half-clad, shining negroes swinging the gigantic utensils with which the seething food is dipped from kettle to kettle; here grouped at the end of the battery, the Creole planters with anxious faces drawing around their central figure as closely as they can; and in the midst the old mousquetaire, dipping, from time to time, the thickening juice, repeating again and again his simple tests, until, in the moment of final trial, there is a common look of suspense, and instantly after it the hands are dropped, heads are raised, the brow is wiped, and there is a long breath of relief—"it granulates!"

"The people were electrified. Etienne de Boré marketed \$12,000 worth of superior sugar. The absence of interdictions that had stifled earlier trade enabled him to sell his product to advantage. The agriculture of the Delta was revolutionized; and, seven years afterward, New Orleans was the market for 200,000 gallons of rum, 250,000 gallons of molasses, and 5,000,000 pounds of sugar. The town contained some twelve distilleries—probably not a subject of unmixed congratulation—and a sugar refinery which produced about 200,000 pounds of loaf sugar; while on the other hand the production of indigo had declined to a total of 3,000 pounds, and soon after ceased".

Jean Etienne Boré was a chemical engineer, surely. The existence of crystals formed while boiling cane juice was well known for a long time by chemists. Prior to de Boré, sugar was made but not of a sort to ship to world markets, it was poorly granulated and very wet, only good for local consumption. Half the first cargo in 1765 headed for France leaked out of >>B0,000 pounds of