Le Journal

Vol. 27, no. 1 Winter 2011
www.noctrl.edu/cfcs

Center for French Colonial Studies
Centre pour l'étude du pays des Illinois

All Sources Are Not Created Equal: A Cautionary Tale

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[Editor's Note: A version of this paper was presented at the annual conference of the Center for French Colonial Studies in Michiana in October, 2010. Space limitations do not allow the printing of several appendices prepared by the author that cite additional details. Readers interested in obtaining these appendices should consider contacting the author directly.]

Once upon a time there was a retired teacher of high school English who found that she had the time, ability, and resources to indulge her passion for the history of *Nouvelle France*. I am that person. I had begun years before as a genealogist and student of my own family history, all of it traceable to *Nouvelle France, Canada*. In my desire to flesh out the lives of my ancestors in Canada, I first turned to the "official" historians. I quickly learned, more than thirty years ago, that my quest would be difficult, especially here in the United States, because the historians writing in English, for the most part, did not know French, and, in particular, they did not know the French of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They used English translations that were commissioned a hundred years ago, and only these sources, or, hand-written transcriptions of the original documents, which is sometimes worse. Having heard, from my cradle days, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French handed down to my parents through the generations, I have a particularly acute sense of the meanings of words that baffle some French scholars.

The one English language historian I came to trust years ago was W. J. Eccles. I recommend anything he has written. His annotated bibliographies were a burst of fresh air for me. With his sometimes brutal, no-holds-barred analysis of the secondary sources, Eccles verified my misgivings. Eccles also recommended several historians writing in French in Canada. I had to order their books from a used-book store, *O Vieux Bouquins*, in Drummondville, Québec, because they are out of print. I thus had a background of reading French language histories of *Nouvelle France* when, about 1999, in preparation for the 300th anniversary of the founding of Detroit, I began to read the documents Clarence Burton collected from France and had translated, the so-called Cadillac Papers, the major source in English for those writing about early Detroit. They were published in the *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* (1903-1904), with some in other volumes. I immediately sensed improperly translated words and other errors in understanding (I will give an example shortly), and this before I even laid eyes on my first photocopy of an original document in the original French, for this is what I eventually began to do. Don't get me wrong. I am grateful that Clarence Burton and others commissioned copies of documents from the French archives and had them copied, translated, and published; but these documents are incomplete, the transcriptions and translations are faulty, and some of the analysis based only on these documents and others like them is outright wrong. In addition, Burton's own works, such as *Cadillac's Village*, must not be taken as the final word, as I have already demonstrated in my 2001 articles in *Michigan's Habitant Heritage* about Étienne Véron Grandmesnil, the younger, and Marie Lepage.[1]

It is true that Joseph Peyser has translated other documents in *Letters from New France*, and in more recent works,[2] but these valuable contributions are again sets of partial and edited translations of documents. He skips over the documentary material dealing with the interesting period of the beginnings of Detroit under the French, 1701 to 1712, literally omitting 1700-1711, perhaps assuming it had been "done," because of the documents in the *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* and in English language translations of selected documents published, in particular, in New York and Wisconsin.

Instead of relying on only what has been translated, I have read actual French correspondence and records on microfilm or copies sent from the archives, including documents that have never been translated or printed in English. In addition, I ordered hundreds of notarial documents, a source only beginning to be mined for their riches, and also judicial cases. I must have ten linear feet of documents at my home. Without any pre-conception of what I would find, I soon made many wonderful discoveries, even some I had never seen explained in any of the specialized articles about aspects of the society of *Nouvelle France*. Long before I read about the Morgan Method, I was practicing it. The historian Edmund Morgan taught that "interpreting the past means laying your own eyes on the

primary sources and seeing patterns there that no one else had seen before … 'Stop telling me what other historians have said and tell me what you see'."[3]

During these early years, I was privileged to work with Gail Moreau-DesHarnais, the editor for the last fifteen years of *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, the journal of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan. She had initiated the research to identify as many as possible of the individuals, men and women, who were present at Fort Pontchartrain during the tenure of Antoine Laumet *dit* de Lamothe Cadillac, a study that resulted in the plaque identifying the known members of the original 1701 convoy that now graces Hart Plaza in Detroit.

I propose to share with you some of my discoveries and also to caution you about the pitfalls of relying only on secondary sources for genealogical information. My discussion is divided into four parts that examine: (1) problems with translation from French into English; (2) errors of transcription from an original document into a published text; (3) sources and resources to fine tune the published genealogical record and the problems with some of them; and (4) six examples of the dangers of using only secondary sources or transcriptions of records.

Problems with Translation from French to English

Even the scholars who edited the *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (*JR*) in the Thwaites edition have howling errors, and these are not limited to their having had to rely on nineteenth-century Father Cyprian Tanguay to identify individuals, a serious problem in and of itself. (I will return to the subject of Tanguay and other genealogical sources.) For example, one *JR* footnote says Nicolas Campeau, was "nicknamed 'Niagara,' from having been, when a child, dropped in the water by a voyageur at the Niagara portage." By the time I found this reference in an on-line version of the *JR*, I had already photocopied from a Family History Library microfilm Nicolas Campeau's baptism record in the registers of Montréal, because, by then, I was working primarily with original documents on microfilm or on copies ordered from the archives in Canada.

The son of Jacques Campeau and Cécile Catin, Nicolas was born 18 July 1710 and *ondoyé* at the Niagara portage. Now I have known the meaning of the French verb *ondoyer* from early childhood. It is what my father did for my sister, who was born at home and died within a few hours, in 1933. Because he feared she would die, Dad gave this new-born baby lay baptism, *ondoyement*, sprinkling her with ordinary tap water and saying: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (I'm sure he said these words in French.) If a priest cannot be present to administer the sacrament, anyone can baptize. The parents of the Campeau baby in 1710 continued their voyage from Détroit down to Montréal, where, on 4 August, Nicolas was baptized conditionally, *sous condition*, in case the lay baptism, *ondoyement*, had not been performed properly. He was supplied the formal rites of baptism: the application of holy oils, the renouncing of Satan, etc., and he was welcomed into the Holy Catholic Church with the recording of the act. Nicolas Rose, voyageur, served as godfather and gave the baby his first name; the godmother was Catherine, daughter of Henri Catin.

But he was not "dropped" in the waters of the Niagara River! There are so many more examples of faulty translation and, also, misunderstandings. As I have had to work through my own misunderstandings, my intent is not to embarrass anyone in citing the items that follow but to strive to set the record straight.

Other words that United States historians seemed not to understand were *habitant* and *fermier*, both translated inaccurately as farmer, not only by the earlier writers but even by current writers. These errors result in more serious problems. A *habitant* in New France was simply an inhabitant, one who had decided to make the New World his place of residence, his home. He may have mustered out of his required term as a soldier in his majesty's service, or he or she (*habitante*) was no longer bound by a contract that brought him or her to Canada. As an inhabitant, he or she could pursue any occupations open to him or her, including owning or cultivating a farm and engaging in the fur trade, but the exclusive meaning was not farmer. It is not until the nineteenth century, when many of the histories of French Canada were written in English, that the word *habitant* came to mean almost exclusively farmer, and that for complicated reasons I will not go into here. Read Leslie Choquette's *Frenchmen into Peasants*[4] for a description of the evolution of this word by the nineteenth century and Marcel Trudel, *La Population du Canada en 1666*[5] for its meaning within the context of New France.

Fermier did, much of the time, have to do with the management of a farm, but it did not always have the meaning of cultivator, one responsible for the actual planting, growing, and harvesting of crops on a certain plot of land. Often, it indicated that an individual had been hired to oversee a farm under a leasing agreement; the land had been "farmed out," so to speak.

Modern technology has provided access to old dictionaries. The meaning of the word in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be found at http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17[6]

The word *fermier* derives from the French verb *affermer*. And in the context of the fur trade it refers to a *bail* or lease granted to someone—an agent, a contractor— to take charge of the details of the trade.

Fermier was translated as farmer by writers in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century even when the context made it plain that no farm, in its modern sense, was involved, so that, even in the 1969 *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*[7] entry about LE SUEUR, PIERRE, (Pierre-Charles), the French version speaks of "une exploitation minière" of which "Iberville et le fermier général L'Huillier" were members; but the English version reads "to exploit mines" of which "Iberville and the farmer-general [*sic*] Alexandre L'Huillier were members."

Thus, a *fermier* could be an agent in charge not of a "farm" but of mines, and, very often, in charge of the fur trade. Here is Antoine Laumet *dit* de Lamothe Cadillac using the word:

> Voicy encore une raison qui a fait cesser ce commerce de castor gras. Par exemple, un voyageur, qui avoit acheté à Montréal une livre de poudre à 40 sols, la vendoit aux Outaouas pour une livre de castor gras, qui valoit 4 livres 2 sous, 6 deniers; il déduisoit ses frais et il voyoit à plus près son profit; mais ensuite, venant au bureau de la recette, au lieu que sa livre de castor lui valust 4 francs [*sic*], 2 sous, 6 deniers, elle ne valoit plus que 3 livres, 7 sous et 6 deniers, parce qu'il n'estoit reçu que sur le pied de castor veule, de sorte que tout le profit estoit pour le Fermier, et le pauvre habitant, au lieu d'avoir du gain, se trouvoit en perte par la diminution du prix.[8]

The English translation reads:

> Here is another reason that stopped commerce in greasy beaver. For example, a voyageur who had bought at Montréal one pound of gun powder at 40 *sols* sold it among the Ottawa for one pound of greasy beaver, which had a value of 4 *livres* 2 *sous*, 6 *deniers*; he deducted his costs and he could estimate his profit; but arriving at the bureau that received the pelts, instead of his pound of beaver being valued at 4 *francs*, 2 *sous*, 6 *deniers*, it brought only 3 *livres*, 7 *sous* and 6 *deniers*, because it was accepted at the value of castor *veule*,[9] such that all of the profit went to the *Fermier* [agent with the lease for the fur trade], and the poor *habitant*, instead of a earning a profit found himself at a loss by the decrease in the price paid.

A translation of only the first sentence and part of the last part amply demonstrates the word *fermier* here has nothing to do with growing crops. "Here is one more reason for the decline of greasy beaver. ... all the profit went to the *Fermier*, and the poor inhabitant [*habitant*], instead of obtaining any gain, found himself at a loss by the decrease of the price"

And, here is an example with specific reference to the fort at St. Joseph, from *Les Cahiers des Dix*, Volume 23, 1958: Page 153, footnote 20, RAPQ, 1923-1924, p. 50.

Translation:

> In a Mémoire about the state of affairs in Nouvelle-France in 1757, Bougainville says that "the fort (Saint-Joseph) is situated on the right sight of the river of this name, at twenty *lieues* from its mouth, in Lake Michigan. This post is on the same basis as the Bay (Green [Bay, modern Wisconsin]): the commandant is the *fermier* [agent, holder of the lease] in whole or in part, at the will of the governor general, and he pays the costs; he receives two thousand *francs* of pay and the interpreter five hundred *francs*... The Indians who go there to trade are the Potawatomi, about four hundred men, and some Miami. The yield from this place can be up to 400 *paquets* in skins of raccoons, bears, bobcats, otters, deer, elks."

A recent article about the archaeological dig at St. Joseph[10] includes the comment that there was at least one, perhaps two, "farmers" present at the post, citing Marthe Faribault-Beauregard[11] as a source. It is true she correctly transcribes the French word *fermier* used as a description given of two godparents. The *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* English version,[12] however, translates the word as "farmer". This is not the only error in reading and translating "The St. Joseph Baptismal Register" in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 18 (June, 1926, to March, 1927), pp. 201-239. Here are the two examples as found on the internet version of the MVHR and in images of the records from FamilySearch:

In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty seven I the under signed jean Bapt Lamorinie Missionary of the society of jesus at the post of the river St joseph, Baptized according to the customs and the forms (page 229) of our Holy mother the church catholic apostolic and roman, marie Magdelaine St germain daughter of pierre St germain residing in this post and of felicite javillon his lawful wife. she had for godfather Sieur porlier de Beynak and Magdelaine Roy wife of Sieur nicolas lefebvre farmer [*sic, fermier*, agent of the fur trade in this context] of this post. in testimony thereof I signed the present entry the same year as above the eighteenth of march. the said child was three days old .

One more record in the St. Joseph register uses the term *fermier*:

In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty eight I the undersigned supplied the ceremonies of Holy baptism according to the usual customs of our Holy mother the church to archange Lhuilic [*sic*] daughter of Charles Lhuillic and of angelique larchevesque married, born the fifth of november of the said year and baptized because of danger 3 days after her birth that is to say the eighth. she had for godfather louis urtubise farmer [*sic, fermier*, agent of the fur trade in this context] of this post and for godmother amable Larchevesque daughter of larchevesque deceased and marie reaume. in testimony thereof I signed the present entry at St joseph this 26 of november of the year 1758 the godfather signed with me and the godmother not knowing how to sign when asked made her usual mark

Signature of *Louis hurtebise*

Image from FamilySearch Pilot, Quebec Parish Records

I had satisfied myself that Louis Hurtebise can indeed be documented as an agent of the fur trade before July of 2010, when I finally obtained a copy of Dunning Idle's *The Post of the St. Joseph River during the French Régime.*[13] I had previously noticed this work cited by several authors, including those who speculated whether the dig would find evidence of a "farm," but I had not been able to obtain a copy. On page 153, Idle refers to Louis Hurtebise, the godfather above, not as a farmer but as a partner in the fur trade.

> The last French officer commanding at St. Joseph River [Captain Jean Leverrier] had a monopoly of the post. He was paid 2000 *livres* and his interpreter 500 *livres* annually by the government, but Leverrier was expected to pay the expenses of the post. His two partners, [Pierre] Leduc and Louis Hurtebise, exploited the trade, alternating in making the annual trip down to the colony. They continued in the trade to the end of the French *Régime*.

Throughout his work, Idle does translate the word *fermier* as farmer, as did his contemporaries, but he clearly does not mean someone who worked the land.

There are many other words that have been given misleading translations, such as *débaucher* and *y entretient*.

Débaucher:

When applied to a woman, it was translated as: he [Bourgmont] having *debauched* her (which everyone has read in a sexual sense). When applied to a man, it was translated as:
asking him why he [La Roze] deserted this fort, he said that he had been *enticed away* by the man named Laveille of the Company of Debergére and by Bascus of the Company of Longeuil. Inquiring who was the cause of the desertion of the man named Jolicoeur, he said that Sieur de Bourgmont *enticed him away*,...

Both examples are from the same "Jugement rendu par le Conseil de guerre Contre Bertellemy pichon soldat de la Comp[agnie] de Cortemanche [*sic*] de la garnison du fort pontchartrain," Notaire Grandmesnil, photocopy of original, but the MPHS translation.

Y entretient:

The same MPHS translation interprets the French phrase "*y entretient*" by saying that Bourgmont is "keeping" this same woman, named Lachenets here.[14] The passage, in context, reads:

> But M. de Tonty said to them [the Indians]: "the world must be turned upside down, they send me a private soldier [Bourgmont] to command me." These words redoubled their [the Indians'] uneasiness, of which the Sr. De Bourgmont was warned by a woman named Le Chenette [*sic*] whom he kept.[15]

In its modern sense, the word "kept" can suggest nothing less than that she is his mistress. As a result, some historians have even described this woman as "a slut." (See DCB, English version biography of Outoutagan, Jean Leblanc). What is the French meaning, and, especially, what was its meaning in 1708? In a modern dictionary: it simply means to maintain, to see to the subsistence of or to have a conversation with:

Le Petit Larousse:[16]

ENTRETENIR v.t.

I. 1. Tenir en bon état. *Entretenir une maison.*
   2. Faire durer, maintenir dans le même état. *Entretenir la paix.*
   3. Pourvoir à la subsistance de. *Entretenir une famille.* <> *Se faire entretenir par qqn, vivre à ses frais.*

II. *Entretenir qqn de qqch, lui en parler, lui dire ce qu'on en pense.*

I invite you to read my examination of the shifting translations concerning these words in my work published 1999 and 2000 in *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, the journal of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan. See our web site for an index of articles published.

Errors of Transcription from an Original Document into a Published Text

One of my most exciting discoveries was the result of something I "saw" that, apparently, no one else had seen. Reading the original document on microfilm was a revelation in more than one sense; for, you see, the English translation of this passage, published in the *Historical Collections of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*[17] and even the French language transcription of the original document available in the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library are inaccurate. It is important to note here that photocopies and microfilms did not exist in the nineteenth century when Burton commissioned hand-written copies of the original documents. It is these copies that are in the Burton Historical Collection.[18]

The arrival of Mesdames Cadillac and de Tonty to join their husbands at Fort Pontchartrain in the fall of 1701 has been cited many, many times or imagined in several highly fictional accounts and even in drawings and paintings. [For an image of the arrival of Madame Cadillac depicted in a mural at the Detroit Public Library, Woodward Avenue and in

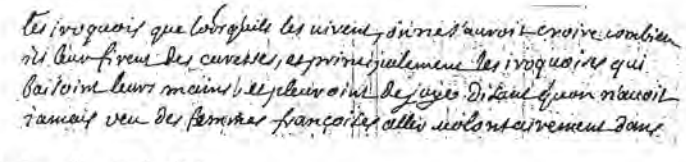
the Calendar: Les Français d'Amérique/*French in America* see http://www.johnfishersr.net/french_in_america_calendar.html]

Cadillac's 1702 description of the reception the two women received from the Iroquois is, however, very short. In the MPHC English translation, it reads:

> Last year, my wife and Mme. Tonty set out on the 10th of Sept. with our families to come and join us there. Their resolution in undertaking so long and laborious a journey seemed very extraordinary. It is certain that nothing [ever] [19] astonished the **Iroquois** so greatly as when they saw them. You could not believe how many caresses they offered them, and particularly the **Iroquois** who kissed their hands and wept for joy, saying that French women had never been seen coming willingly to their country. It was that which made the **Iroquois also say** that they well knew that the general peace which the Chev. de Calliere had just made was indeed sincere, and that they could no longer doubt it since women of this rank came amongst them with so much confidence.[20]

The first time I read the English version of this passage, I sensed there was something wrong with the translation beginning with the phrase "particularly the Iroquois." Reading the original French text confirmed my suspicions, but in a most surprising way. I have purposely highlighted the word **Iroquois** in three places above and indented a portion below. The original French text reads:

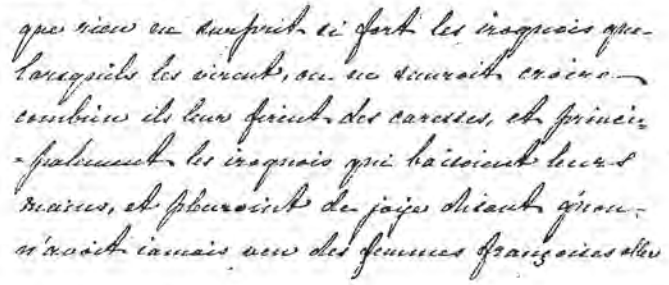
> L'année passée ma femme, et mad[e] tonty partirent le dix de 7[bre] avec nos familles[21] pour nous y venir joindre, leur resolution parût fort extraordinaire dans l'entreprise d'un si long et penible voyage, il est certain que rien ne surprit si fort
>
> > **les iroquois** qui lorsq'uils [*sic*[22]] virent, on nes'auroit [*sic*] croire combien ils leur firent des caresses, et principalement **les iroquoises** qui baisoint leurs mains, et pleuroint de joye disant q'uon n'avoit jamais veu des femmes françoises aller volontairement dans leur païs, c'est cequifit dire **aussi aux iroquois** q'uils connoissoint bien que la paix generalle que monsieur le ch[v] de calliere venoit de faire êtoit veritablement sincere, et q'uils n'en pouvoint plus doutter; puisque des femmes de cette distinction passoint chez eux avec tant de confiance[23]



What a shock it was to see the completely legible words:

LES **IROQUOISES**, the feminine plural form of Iroquois in French. It is the women, the *Iroquoises*, who kissed the hands of the French ladies and cried for joy; it is the females, *Iroquoises*, who, as they were kissing hands, said: "Never [before] has anyone seen French women go voluntarily to their [the Iroquois'] country." And it is the fact of the presence of Mesdames Cadillac and Tonty that made them, the *Iroquoises*, also say **to the male Iroquois** (*aussi aux Iroquois*)[24] that "they know well the widespread peace Monsieur le Chevalier de Callière has just made is truly sincere and they can no longer doubt it, since women of such distinction come to them (*chez eux* = to their home)[25] with such confidence."

For 300 years, the voice of these women *Iroquoises* has been silenced by an inaccurate English translation and faulty transcriptions.[26]



Transcription, "B.H.C. [Burton Historical Collection], Cadillac Papers (French), vol. I, pp. 85 sqq."

How much more of their role in affairs of consequence may have been obscured or ignored? Gilles Havard, however, writing in France, correctly spells the word "*Iroquoises*" when he quotes the passage.[27]

Of course, I am privileged in being able to read French, the language of my cradle, although I bitterly regret being unable to write it well. The French of my parents descends directly for almost four hundred years from the French of New France. You, however, do not need to know how to read French to be warned about what has occurred, and continues to occur, in the published record. Thus, faulty transcription, in addition to faulty translation, can distort or obscure the truth.

It is my firm conviction that writers discussing the early years of the founding of Detroit who use only the currently available published sources in English are bound to continue to perpetuate errors. I am not the only one who believes this. As I commented in a footnote in 2002: "Brian Leigh Dunnigan in "'The Prettiest Settlement in America': A Select Bibliography of Early Detroit through the War of 1812," says, "The full history of French Detroit prior to the British conquest of Canada remains to be written. [...] A fresh and full biography of Cadillac is badly needed." And: "The historical literature pertaining to eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Detroit is of mixed quality and far too sparse. The subject offers much opportunity for the historian."[28] In 2005, at the seminar sponsored by the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan to celebrate

its 25th anniversary, I wrote:

> If you leave here today with one thought from my presentation, let it be that you cannot trust the account of the French-Canadian experience in the standard, published histories of Detroit or Michigan, not even most of the more recent ones published in 2001 for the 300th anniversary of the founding of Detroit. These works give token mention to the founding of Detroit (usually getting most of it wrong), touch briefly on the beginning of the Fox War in 1712, and then jump rapidly to the coming of the British in the 1760s. That's fifty years of existence ignored or dismissed without a single shred of detail. And then the "history" of Detroit and Michigan really begins with the arrival of the Americans in the 1790s.

The traps researchers can be led into become obvious when I read articles that rely only on selectively chosen translated sources. In sum, partial or incorrect readings result in incorrect interpretations.

Sources and Resources to Fine Tune the Published Genealogical Record and the Problems With Some of Them

In using secondary source indexes for biographical details, note that we stand on the shoulders of the researchers who went before us; research, though, is always on-going; and modern technology offers a means to refine and correct the published record. We must trust, but verify, and learn how to read these secondary sources critically.

Historians and genealogists typically cite the following sources for genealogical details about the society of New France and its outposts, including those in Michiana:

Tanguay, L'Abbé Cyprian. *Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Canadiennes.*
Éditions Élysée, 1975 reprint in seven volumes, originally published 1871-1890.

Tanguay is the great-grandfather of French-Canadian genealogy. He includes selected and transcribed vital records from the beginnings of the New France colony to scattered references to late 18th century. Not all parish registers consulted, but contains documentation for some original records that have since disappeared, such as some of the Sorel parish records. Flawed by many guesses, "corrections" or assumed additions; incorrect links of children to parents; and the suppression of illegitimate births. Tanguay's valuable work has been revised ever since it first appeared. Leboeuf provided some corrections and additions in the 1950s. Use Tanguay with extreme caution, especially for events without a precise date. Most of the older secondary sources use him exclusively.

English language transcriptions of the Michilimackinac "St. Ann" (*sic*) Michilimackinac Marriage Register, 1725-1821;[29] Michilimakinak (*sic*) Register of Baptisms, 1695-1821; Register of Interments (Mackinac) (*sic*), 1743-1806; published in Wisconsin, Vols. 18 and 19; and the St. Joseph des Illinois (*sic*, Niles, Michigan) baptismal registers, published by MVHR, all now subject to caution.

Ste. Anne de Detroit Parish Registers are available on microfilm at the Burton Library of the Detroit Public Library, Main Branch, Detroit, Michigan. The recently purchased microfilm to replace the old one is dismally dark! A transcription is also available there in a hard copy. FHL has a microfilmed transcription made by a Mr. Prudhomme. It has many errors. The Drouin Collection also has a microfilmed transcription, with errors of its own. This Drouin transcription is one of the digital files at Ancestry.ca, which also has digitized the original records. You have to know which you are looking at when you access the Drouin Collection for Ste. Anne de Detroit.

Jetté, René. *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec.* Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. 1983.

Vital records up to 1730 only, originally based on PRDH as of 1983 but without references to many notarial records and other primary sources consulted since 1983. Valuable, but contains some errors or misreadings. Updates and corrections have been published in a variety of sources, including PRDH.

Denissen, Rev. Fr. Christian. *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936*, Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987 revision.

Please note that two separate crews of individuals worked in the 1970s and 1980s on the original publication and on the revision. Denissen's notes compiled before his death have been lost. He was a contemporary of Burton.

Father Denissen did not fully understand the French-Canadian "dit" (called or alias) naming system. Originally compiled by him at the end of the nineteenth century, most of his work for the older records relies on Tanguay. Even the 1987 revision suffers from not having consulted more modern research. Denissen Anglicized (gave English spelling) to all first names; thus Pierre becomes Peter, Marie becomes Mary, Étienne becomes Stephen, etc. Useful as a starting point, but verify the records, especially the older ones. Many corrections have been (and continue to be) published in other sources.

Faribault-Beauregard, Marthe. *La population des forts français d'Amérique* (XVIIIe siècle). Tome 1. Montréal: Éditions Bergeron. 1982; Tome 2. 1984.

This French-language compilation of data organizes the baptisms, marriages, and burials in alphabetical order under each of these categories for each "fort" and standardizes some spellings. The sequence of events is thus lost. Note: she admits in her introduction that she enhanced the original records by adding her interpretation of who certain people are, based on her research, but she does not indicate when she does this. This is a valuable secondary resource, nevertheless.

Programme de recherche en démographie historique (PRDH). Gaëtan Morin Éditeur. [In English: Program of research in historical demography] Available in book format, records to 1765; on CD-Rom to 1799 (very expensive and lacks the periodic updates to data), and on the internet to 1799, with some deaths after 1799 now included. http://www.genealogie.umontreal.ca

There is an English version of PRDH. You can browse the internet site at no cost but must subscribe to see the full "certificates" available. Cost is very reasonable. Background material on the site is wonderful. Take the time to read it and to examine the sample documents and to consult the glossary. Also see Name Variations, a crucial step in French-Canadian genealogy. Currently this is among the best for records from the mother colony, to 1799, though less complete for originally-French settlements in modern-day U. S.

PRDH is a new reading and computerization of actual extant records, begun in the 1960s and committed to ongoing corrections and additions. Originally designed to support research in demographics, population patterns, as its title states, so links were not attempted among families in the book form edition. Spelling is as found on the records (or as read by whoever did the reading from the originals!). You may well find the same ancestor listed under varied spellings and one or more "dit" or "dite," the feminine version, (called or also-known-as) names, but names have been standardized on the Internet version to ease searching. Contains references from early censuses, confirmations, lists of patients at some hospitals, etc. The Internet edition provides family links. All names recorded in the text of a document are transcribed, such as parents, godparents (although not always identified as such), witnesses, officiating priests, and sometimes brothers or sisters or other relatives of married couples, if mentioned in the text, for all records, basically, to 1765. Later "certificates" are not as complete. Names of those who only signed a document, such as a marriage contract, are NOT listed if the names do not appear in the text. I have found some interesting information by examining copies of the originals to see all of the signatures. Some labels on the "certificates," such as whether an individual was present at an event (for example, the father and mother of a baptized child) can cause misunderstanding in interpreting the original event. All that can be said is that the parents were considered to be alive at the time of the record unless one or both signed as present.

These secondary sources usually contain data about births/baptisms, marriages, deaths/burials, other recorded events copied—transcribed—by someone from primary records. Always remember that a published transcription of an original record, in part or in whole, is not automatically guaranteed to be accurate. It just indicates that at least one reader saw and copied the details.

Modern Technology: Internet Resources

Researchers can now check for themselves whether a published source of genealogical information is accurate. Family History Library still has microfilms for rental.

As of early in 2007, ancestry.com and ancestry.ca have digital images of the Drouin microfilms available on the internet, with a subscription. Note that Drouin images are, on the whole, civil records, sometimes transcriptions.

FamilySearch Pilot Site has Quebec Parish Records, most of them the church version. With sites like Library and Archives Canada and its search engines, summaries and digital images of colonial documents can be viewed and downloaded. BAnQ with its Pistard search engine can do the same for judicial, some notarial, and other records that have been digitized. Records are continuously added!

Six Examples of the Dangers of Using Only Secondary Index Sources or Transcriptions of Records

There can be problems with using only index sources. Here are a few examples.

1. The transcriber may have misread the original.
The transcriber may have misread the original, easy to do given the unfamiliar handwriting and the physical condition of early records, or may have made errors in translation. One of my favorites is the recording of a daughter said to be named Mercredy (Wednesday) Boivin, apparently because the reader could not accept there might be two daughters named *anne boyvin*, one born on a *Mercredy*. I am not immune to errors like this, one example being my misreading of the word *sise*, feminine form of *sis*, situated, for *seize*, sixteen, in my early study of notarial documents. The reference was to a residence located on a street and not to a house number. I had to see many examples of the same "house number" before I verified the definition. One simply cannot make assumptions like this, especially when dealing with older French words or phrases.

Example: *Adèle Geneviève Le Tendre* versus *Md lle Gennevieve le tendre*
Error in reading a first name led some to mischaracterize a woman. Some "guess" that she served as a servant for the Lamothe Cadillac family. Not on your life!

2. The transcriber may have "corrected" the original because of other known information.
Even apparently simple spelling "corrections" can mislead. An index with corrections like these may also contain faulty links forced between individuals with the same or similar names, links based solely on the assumption that a same name equals the same person, a particularly dangerous assumption for many of the families of New France. In the best of all possible worlds, a transcriber should record exactly what the record contains—no more, no less—without attempting to "correct" anything. Any additional information should be separated and identified as such. Perceived errors in a text should also be indicated but not corrected in the text itself. Traditionally, the Latin *sic* ("so," "thus," "in this manner") in brackets [*sic*] within a quoted text signals a perceived error or a variation to an accepted standard.

Example:The 1665 "death" of Pierre Couc *dit* Lafleur de Cognac can still be found cited on the web and in modern works. He actually died in 1690.

3. Transcription of data in a record is usually incomplete. The record may have more details.
Reading neatly printed names and dates creates an abstract devoid of context. The record may have more details, sometimes crucial details that could modify the impression created by an excerpt. Also, the position within a set of other records can provide additional information. This is a particular problem when evaluating quotations cited by historians. What does the partial quotation omit? Where is it situated in time and place? What happened next? Does anyone else express the same information?

Example: Jetté informed me of the marriage contract of Isabelle Couc *dite* Lafleur de Cognac and Joachim Germano in April of 1684, but reading the contract itself made the two of them live for me. Other men and women have been stereotyped because of judgments based on insufficient evidence. Marie Madeleine Réaume was careful to use her French legal married names, L'Archevêque and Chevallier, and conformed to the "French" legal formality of a marriage contract. At her death, she was buried inside the church of Varennes. Yet some call her more Indian than French.

4. Publication of a reader's notes can create and/or perpetuate errors.
Just because something is published or on a historical marker does not guarantee eternal accuracy.

Example:Too many to list! Historical Markers perpetuate the errors in a public way.

5. Later research may have corrected a reader's errors, judgments, or "guesses."
New primary sources may have been located or old readings corrected. In this field, research is always ongoing until the last scrap of evidence has been examined, even though it is difficult to have to say: No further evidence has been found to date. Leave it to the novelists to embroider the facts.

Example: Establishing the facts that were stretched in a very dramatic 2006 story about two baptisms.[30] This was the original published passage:

On the bitterly cold evening of December 13, Jean Becquet, who directed Quebec's Hôtel-Dieu, called for Father Étienne Boullard. When Boullard arrived at the hospital, he found an ailing Indian woman called Marguerite-Geneviève, whom he promptly baptized. Returning to his small residence at the seminary, the priest recorded what he had learned about the woman during his visit. She was thirty-five years old. She had a fourteen-year-old daughter called Marie-Louise, whom he also baptized. She was a Fox Indian. And she was a slave: "captured in Fox territory by the Marquis de Vaudreuil," the governor of New France, "with whom she presently resides."

Both an error in a secondary source and the author's misunderstanding/misuse of details led to falsehoods in this story.

6. The original record may itself contain errors.
The original record may contain mistakes reported by the principals involved or recorded by the priest or clerk. Common sense has to be used when evaluating, for example, the entry of one sister's name when the other sister is most certainly the party involved. This is not just a phenomenon of the past. I was a witness to a priest declaring the name of a younger sister as the intended bride, instead of the elder sister's name, my friend's. Imagine what could have happened when the principals were illiterate or if they were inattentive while the record was read aloud.

Example:Three husbands for Marie Josèphe de Tonty? Or only two? A distracted priest led to a misunderstanding by those who transcribed the record. Publications that stress French men married to Native women and the supposed status of mixed-ancestry children sometimes lead to exaggerations of just how many can be documented.

This discussion provides examples of each of the "problems" but does not exhaust them. See my published work and also the work of Gail Moreau-Desharnais, to whom I express my gratitude for her own meticulous research, her encouragement, collaboration, and friendship over the last twelve years. See her many contributions to refining the story of French Canada and its people.

The following guidelines are useful:
Resources are available to make history more accurate and rewarding.
Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, but not his or her own facts!
The truth is more fascinating than any of the fictions that continue to be perpetuated.
Don't ASSUME anything, at least not without saying that you are guessing, and don't believe everything that has been written about our ancestors.
Go to the original sources and/or competent researchers/translators, whenever possible.

At the risk of sounding redundant, I have been following the advice of the historian Edmund Morgan, who taught that "interpreting the past means laying your own eyes on the primary sources and seeing patterns there that no one else had seen before ... 'Stop telling me what other historians have said and tell me what you see'." My intent has been to encourage more thorough scrutiny of the old sources and openness to modern technology's tools to refine what has been accomplished in the past.

In an op-ed piece in the New York Times, Maureen Dowd,[31] quotes Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." Then, quoting Charles Mackay in *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, she writes: "people are more prone to believe the 'Wondrously False' than the 'Wondrously True.' " And "Of all the offspring of time, Error is the most ancient, and is so old and familiar an acquaintance, that Truth, when discovered, comes upon most of us like an intruder, and meets the intruder's welcome."

This is how my discoveries have sometimes been treated when I have shared them. Five years ago when the FCHSM celebrated its 25th anniversary, I said:

> Today is the 200th Anniversary of the fire that destroyed the French *Ville du Détroit*. What began with the fire of 1805—the eradication of all physical traces of *Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit du Lac Érié*—has continued in the neglect and distortion of the French-Canadian presence in Detroit and Michigan in the published historical record. Even worse, much of what has made it into the published historical record and continues to be perpetuated is either [sic] incomplete, biased, or downright wrong.

I have not changed my mind in this, the 30th anniversary of our society. While I have focused, in part, on the secondary sources for the history of Detroit and Michigan, much the same can be said for the old secondary source histories of other places founded or settled by French Canadians in the United States. More and more of these out-of-copyright sources and translations of French texts have become (and will continue to become) available on the Internet. To paraphrase the old warning, *Caveat emptor*: Let the reader be aware.[32]

There has been a flurry of scholarship in recent years to remedy the situation, some of which is also appearing on the web. I hope my discussion will provide a basis for making judgments about sources you can trust and sources you should treat with caution. This has been, after all, a cautionary tale.

Endnotes

1 Suzanne Boivin Sommerville. "Marie Lepage & Etienne Veron Grandmesnil: Rush to Judgement? An Example of Misinterpreted Evidence," *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 22, no. 1 (January 2001): 25-34.

———. "Marie Lepage & Etienne Véron Grandmesnil: Rush to Judgement? An Example of Misinterpreted Evidence (Part 2)," *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (April 2001): 72-81.

———. "Marie Lepage and Etienne Véron Grandmesnil: Rush to Judgement? An Example of Misinterpreted Evidence (Conclusion)," *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (July 2001): 114-123.

2 Joseph L. Peyser, *Letters from New France, The Upper Country 1686-1783*, University of Illinois Press, 1992; *Edge of Empire*, Documents of Michilimackinac, 1671-1716, Translated by Joseph L. Peyser, Edited by José António Brandão, East Lansing / Mackinac Island: Michigan State University Press and Mackinac State Historic Parks, 2008. Peyser has several other books of translations of documents from the same publisher, such as *On the Eve of the Conquest: The Chevalier de Raymond's Critique of New France in 1754* (1997); and *Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre: Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur* (1996).

3 http://www.common-place.org/vol-01/no-03/school/

4 Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants, Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*. Harvard University Press, 1997.

5 Marcel Trudel, *La Population du Canada en 1666*, Sillery, Québec: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1995.

6 Dictionnaires d'autrefois, French dictionaries of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Main page: http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17

7 The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is on the web in both English and French versions. This Le Sueur biography by A. P. Nasitir, professor of history at San Diego State College, was originally published in 1969. Note: much of even this excellent secondary source is in need of revision to correct errors.

8 LAMOTHE CADILLAC, Antoine Laumet, dit de (1658-1730). Source: Library of Congress, Margry / Découvertes 5, Référence MARGRY, Pierre (éd.), 1883, Découvertes et établissement des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale, 1614-1698, 5e partie, Première formation d'une chaîne de poste entre le fleuve Saint-Laurent et le golfe du Mexique (1683-1724), Paris, Imprimerie D. Jouaust, 697 p. Cinquième tome d'une série de six ; p. 148 («Mémoire adressé au comte de Maurepas»)

9 "Castor veule robes had been scraped thin and treated, but not worn." "Negotiation in a Contested Periphery: Indians in the Fur Trade," paper presented 4 May 2002 at the Annual Meeting on the Political Economy of World Systems, Riverside, California, May 2-4, by P. Nick Kardulias, College of Wooster, citing Innis, Harold A., *The Fur Trade in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1956. irows.ucr.edu/conferences/pews02/pprkardulias.DOC

10 Jose Antonio Brandao and Michael Shakir Nassaney, "Suffering for Jesus: penitential practices at Fort St. Joseph," *The Catholic Historical Revue*, 94: 3 (July 2008) p. 76+, footnote 13. Read at Academic OneFile, 8/24/2010.

11 Marthe Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d'Amérique* (XVIIIe siècle), 2 vols, (Montréal 1982 and 1984), 1: 184.

12 The St. Joseph baptismal records are not presented in consecutive order: (Due to length divided here into five parts) http://gbl.indiana.edu/ethnohistory/archives/miamis6/M14-22_27a.html

More at http://gbl.indiana.edu/ethnohistory/archives/miamis6/M14-22_39a.html and http://gbl.indiana.edu/ethnohistory/archives/miamis7/M23-30_16a.html (1727-1731) and for 1773 at http://gbl.indiana.edu/ethnohistory/archives/miamis19/miamitoc21.html

13 Dunning Idle, *The Post of the St. Joseph River during the French Régime*, Niles, Michigan: Support the Fort, Inc., Fort St. Joseph Museum, 2003.

14 Lachenets and Le Chenette are variant spellings for La Techenet or La Tichenet, *la femme de Techenet / Tichenet*.

15 MPHC, Vol. 33, p. 432.

16 *Le Petit Larousse Illustré 1996*. Paris: Larousse, 1995.

17 "Cadillac Papers," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection*, Volume 33 [MPHC]. Some writers in France, such as Gilles Havard, can and do work from the original French, not the transcriptions I mention. When they quote this passage, the word in question is correctly given in the feminine form.

18 Detroit Public Library, Burton Historical Collection, Cadillac Papers (French), vol. I, pp. 85 sqq. Burton "enlisted

the cooperation of the great London bookseller, B. F. Stevens, who assigned the task of translation to his trusted long-time employee, Miss Edith Moodie, who compared the printed documents with their Paris originals, with a view to eliminating those errors which had gained entrance to Margry's published volumes." Milo Milton Quaife, editor, "Historical Introduction," *The Western Country in the 17th Century*, The memoirs of Antoine Lamothe Cadillac and Pierre Liette, New York: The Citadel Press, 1962, p. xiii. Margry's work is well-known for its errors and omissions. I read microfilms or copies of the originals whenever possible, and now download digital versions.

19 The brackets appear as shown and are not my addition.

20 MPHC, Vol. 33, p. 138. The details in this section are adapted from my "The Other Women and Early Detroit, Part Two," originally published in *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, the journal of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan, 23, no. 1 (January 2002): 23-28.

21 The numeral 7 was an abbreviation for the month of September, (*sept* is seven in Latin). The numerals 8, 9, and 10 (or their Roman versions viii, ix, and x) stood for October, November, and December, respectively.

22 *Qu'ils* is consistently written "q'uils" on this document, as is *qu'on* as "q'uon".

23 25 September 1702, "Description du Detroit", Lamothe Cadillac at Québec to Pontchartrain in France, AC C 11E, Vol. 14, ff. 119-119v, NAC microfilm F-412. My thanks to Gail Moreau DesHarnais for checking my transcription, although this document is not nearly as hard to decipher as many are. The "allies," Ottawa and others at the fort in the fall of 1701, greeted the ladies with rounds of gun fire. Cadillac editorializes that their pleasure at seeing the ladies indicates they approve of the establishment of the fort and that they believe it will be a good one.

24 The phrase *aussi aux Iroquois* could also mean the sincerity of the 1701 peace was discussed among the Iroquois.

25 The Detroit area was the winter hunting ground of the Iroquois after they drove the earlier inhabitants away in wars.

26 At least one other French language transcription is also wrong, based on an excerpt of this same letter, including the passage above, published in Ernest J. Lajeunesse, C.S.B., *The Windsor Border Region*, University of Toronto Press: 1960, pp. 242-243. The document transcribed is identified as "B.H.C. [Burton Historical Collection], Cadillac Papers (French), vol. I, pp. 85 sqq." This French version changes the punctuation of both the original and the Burton Library French copy and cleans up some of the spelling.

27 Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages, Indiens et Français dans le Pays d'en Haut, 1660-1715*, Septentrion : Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003, p. 618 and note 9, p. 670.

28 *The Michigan Historical Review*, Special Issue Detroit 300, Volume 27, No. 1, Spring 2001, 1-20, comment on p. 11 and p. 15, underlining mine. Dunnigan himself is author of the wonderful book of maps and illustrations, *Frontier Metropolis, Picturing Early Detroit, 1701-1838*, Wayne State University Press, 2001. His summary of the founding of Detroit is significantly better than most I have read and definitely superior to the summaries in the other "new" books published for the three-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Detroit."

29 Also, found on the internet: "Annels [*sic*] of Fort Mackinac" by Dwight H. Kelton, Chicago, Fergus Printing Company. 1882. Reprinted in 1992, Mackinac State Historic Parks, Mackinac Island, Michigan, pp. 58-69.

30 Brett Rushforth, " 'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 60, Issue 4, read at http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/wm/60-4/rushforth.html

31 Maureen Dowd, "Going Mad in Herds," *New York Times*, Week in Review, Sunday, August 22, 2010, p. 9.

32 This section is adapted from my "Evaluating the Secondary Sources for French-Canadian History, *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, journal of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan, Vol. 27, No. 2, Apr. 2006, pp. 53-59.

Memories of the 2010 Conference of the Center for French Colonial Studies in Michiana

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[Editor's note: Cathrine Davis served as one of the student volunteers who assisted with the logistics of the conference in Michiana (South Bend, IN/Niles, MI). She I currently studying anthropology, archaeology, and French at Western Michigan University. She has participated in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project for two consecutive field seasons through the summer camp program. She plans to work on the project again in 2011 and hopes to study in Quebec through the WMU-Laval University exchange program.]

Traveling along the St. Joseph River today, the soggy, flooded marshland appears to be the last place anyone would want to live. However, if we were to look back in time, we would see the bustling center of commerce and culture that persisted for many years as a key French outpost in the Great Lakes region. Records and archaeological evidence from Fort St. Joseph and other French settlements of the period continue to spark our interest and drive our quest for a better understanding of the people and how they lived. The 2010 Center for French Colonial Studies Conference, focused on the French in Michigan, compelled attendees to examine in different perspectives the lives and legacy of the French who came to Michigan and the cultures they created and encountered. The conference was held at The Inn at St. Mary's in South Bend, Indiana, a short drive from the site of the recently rediscovered Fort St. Joseph in Niles, Michigan. On Friday, October 22, the conference began with the traditional wine and cheese reception, generously underwritten by the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan. The conference itself was underwritten in part by the Joseph L. Peyser Endowment for the Study of New France, the Canadian Studies Initiative at

Western Michigan University, Worth Camp, and Ruth Bryant. Attendees mingled and looked at panels showcasing aspects related to the life of women in New France created by the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project with the assistance of a grant from the Chicago Office of the Delegation de Quebec. In addition to these panels, a slideshow titled "The French in North America," created to accompany an exhibit put on by the Western Michigan University's Canadian Studies initiative was shown as the attendees filtered in. Reenactors from Support the Fort, a group dedicated to educating the public about Fort St. Joseph, were also in attendance in their period attire. After a welcoming speech by Professor Michael Nassaney, conference goers retired before the main conference in the morning.

On Saturday the presentation portion of the conference began with a welcome and brief history of Fort St. Joseph provided by Barb Cook, Chair of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Advisory Committee who represented the mayor of Niles as well as Support the Fort. The topics that were presented focused on 3 main areas of French occupation in Michigan: the Mackinac/St. Ignace region, southwest Michigan, and the Detroit/River Raisin area. The latter of these areas was the topic of a lecture presented by Guillaume Teasdale, a doctoral candidate from York University in Toronto. The lecture, titled *The French of Orchard County: Territory, Landscape and Ethnicity in the Detroit River Region, 1682-1815*, looked primarily at the way the landscape was kept and managed in French Michigan. Teasdale presented many maps and traced the early development of Detroit in various côtes (coastal areas) along the river. He explained various conflicts in determining the ownership of land and how claims to land were legitimized in various ways over the period of French occupation. His lecture focused on five clearly defined points: French Imperial Policy and Colonization; British Obstacles to French Territorial Occupation; Recognition of French Land Titles; the French of Orchard County; and *Métis* Society. Continuing with the lecture, Teasdale described the French of Orchard County in more detail, discussing the profitable fruit industry in French Michigan and in the St. Lawrence Valley. The final focus of his lecture sparked considerable discussion throughout the rest of the conference as attendees debated the meaning of *métis*.

Following Teasdale's lecture, Suzanne Sommerville's presentation, *Sources: A Cautionary Tale* (a version of which appears in this issue of *Le Journal*), implored researchers and scholars to avoid certain sources when consulting primary and especially secondary documents, since many have errors of transcription, translation, and misinterpretation. She made sure to note that various words are not what they have been interpreted to be, giving many examples, some of which were rather humorous to conference goers. For example, Sommerville explained that the word *fermier* does not mean farmer, but rather refers to one who loans out land. Like many of the speakers to come, Sommerville also presented her opinion on the word *métis* and the meaning affixed to it, arguing that the word was never used by the *métis* to classify themselves and is as such a misnomer.

The next speaker was Dennis Au, an independent scholar and folklorist whose presentation was entitled *The River Raisin: A Comparative Look*. The lecture looked at the settlement area 36 miles southwest of modern day Detroit. The River Raisin settlement was a melting pot of cultures, giving rise to unique phrases (such as "Comment ça va you muskrat you?") and dishes (muskrat-based dishes remain a beloved tradition in the area today). Au described the impression the local culture left on the few clergymen who were stationed at the rustic church at the settlement. One of the pastors, stationed at the church in 1794, was an Irish priest who disliked his congregation intensely. After calling them "uncivilized" and eventually fleeing for his life when the settlers found that he was paid by the British, we can assume that the other pastors after him left because of similar misunderstandings with the locals. Present in the area as well as in other parts of New France's frontier was the practice of *ondoyer*, an informal baptism by a member of the laity. Eventually this evolved into laity leading worship at the church.

The River Raisin area was a tight knit collection of Native Americans and French settlers that often allied to protect their lands from the common threat of British attack from across the river. Agriculture was a supplementary pursuit that existed alongside a bustling fur trade in the area. Au described the agricultural styles of the inhabitants, with their *piece sur piece* houses and large plots of land running perpendicular to the riverbanks. The settlement was a key producer of pears and snow apples, which still come out of the region today. Eventually, however, the settlement depleted itself in its defense efforts and fell into British hands after the War of 1812. After conquest, the French in the area were valued as diplomats and interpreters employed by the British. The French inhabitants of the area retained their unique culture and *métis* tradition after conquest. The first American governor of the area even remarked on the closeness of the French descendants and Native Americans. Au concluded by encouraging guests to further investigate the newly commemorated River Raisin National Battlefield and reassuring the assembly that muskrat is really quite delicious.

Following a lunch break, the conference reconvened to hear independent scholar Timothy Kent present his topic, *Material Culture of the Western Great Lakes during the French Regime*. Dressed in period clothing and wielding many tools that he recreated himself, Kent gave a riveting presentation that showcased the material culture of the frontier of New France during the fur trade. Kent also told the conference about his Living History Research, his 3000-mile canoe trip from Montreal to Chippawayan, Alberta, done in annual segments, and about his discoveries in the 20 years of researching and replicating the material culture of the area. Some of the objects Kent showed off to the assembly included a buffalo bladder stuffed with corn silk, used as a thickening agent in soups, beaver jaws used in woodworking, and a variety of native technologies adopted and modified by the French, such as stone tools, axes, and fishing lures. Kent took time to explain the everyday garb of a voyageur and how each element functioned in storage and protection, using himself as a model. He also spoke about firearms, their evolution, and their especially interesting and little known parts, such as the gun worm, a small spiral-shaped wire tool

that was used to retrieve unfired bullets from the barrel of a firearm. Altogether, Kent's presentation could best be described as a wonderfully informative sort of show and tell that lent a great deal to the perception of Michigan's voyageur past and how it can be reconstructed through archaeology.

Next, Lynn Evans, Director of Archaeology at Fort Michilimackinac, discussed *The French at the Straits of Mackinac*, examining the history of the fort at Michilimackinac as revealed through historical documents and over 50 years of archaeological excavation. The fort was originally founded north of the Straits of Mackinac when Jesuit missionaries settled in the area, but soon became a major entrepôt after 1715. Even under British control in 1760, the French traders maintained some power in the fort. French occupants lent out the row houses within the fort to the British until the British built their own barracks in a corner of the fort. Much of the construction at Michilimackinac was *poteaux en terre* construction. Today a modern reconstruction of the fort guards the straits and attracts many visitors to the area. Evans showcased some of the artifacts and features that the excavation has uncovered. One of the more interesting discoveries at the site included gilt sequins, evidence of the rank of many of the British officers present at the fort.

The final speaker was Susan Sleeper-Smith, a history professor at Michigan State University, whose presentation, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, was a well researched new approach that considered other reasons for French and Native marriage alliances. Generally, marriages in New France between Native women and French men are explained as an alliance granting access to resources involved in the fur trade, which often they were. However, Sleeper-Smith explained that there were many motives that lead to these cross-cultural alliances that benefited the Native wives of French traders. During the Fur Trade era, many Native Americans had adopted the Catholic faith that the Jesuits in the area preached. Native American women were often disempowered and underappreciated in colonial society, so the native women used Catholicism as a tool to achieve a better quality of life. For example, in native societies, men were allowed to have many wives. If a native woman was a Catholic, she could refuse to marry a man who was already married, since the marriage would then be considered adultery. A Native woman could also, under Catholicism, refuse to marry a pagan man, or even refuse to marry and commit her virginity to the Lord. Often women would use the latter reasoning to convert her entire family to Catholicism as well. When native families converted to Catholicism, it ensured that that family held themselves to the universal standards of the Catholic Church and therefore an improved quality of life for the women in that family. Through marriages with French men, native women made use of other French social institutions as well.

Following the presentations, José António Brandão (Professor of History, Western Michigan University) led the panel discussion, asking the presenters three main questions. Who are French? Who are Native Americans? How do individuals define themselves? The presenters were also asked to explain why they settled on the criteria they did when classifying groups and individuals as French, Native American, or *Métis*. Each presenter gave their input on the topic. Dennis Au brought up the point that perhaps individuals define themselves depending on the community they live in. Lynn Evans stated that the way individuals classify themselves depends on who is asking them to classify themselves. Professor Brandão then left the conference with the deeper question, is it "Self definition or definition by others?"

The Saturday portion of the conference ended with a bang as attendees were treated to an exquisite banquet at the Hilton Garden Inn and later to 18th century entertainment into the night. Entertainment included an 18th century fashion show, where the garb of working women was compared to the dress of middle class women. Bare elbows were the most notable difference and were considered pedestrian and rude in middle class society, but low cut tops were the height of fashion. Male dress styles were also displayed, including a French soldier's uniform from the 1770s. The trend in men's clothing changed from 1720 to 1770 as waistcoats became shorter due to unavailability of fabric. There was also a segment of storytelling done by Genot "White Elk" Picor, a Wyandot Huron man who blended French gestures and Native American sign language to tell traditional native stories. French songs were sung, including "Chevaliers de la table ronde" and "À la claire fontaine." Attendees were also treated to period French dancing techniques, the precursor to ballet and cotillion styles. Later the attendees took the dance floor and tried the dance steps themselves. Attendee Rick Hahn exclaimed "It's hard to tell your left from your right when you're scrambling like that!" The attendees certainly enjoyed the night and many were still talking about it the next day.

The final day of the conference began at the Niles District Library, where many of the attendees assembled to learn more about Fort St. Joseph and to see the site and related monuments. Professor Nassaney, the Principal Investigator of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project, gave a brief overview of the site's discovery and the work done in the years since. "I'd be amiss if I didn't welcome you to the land of four flags," Nassaney said as he began his presentation. Niles is the City of Four Flags because of the many nations who have occupied the fort: the French, who founded it, the British, who gained it after the French and Indian War, the Spanish, who invaded for a day and sacked the fort before heading back to St. Louis, and of course the American flag that flew over the fort after the British ceded Michigan to America. Nassaney spoke about the 1998 rediscovery of the fort, when Support the Fort asked Western Michigan University to attempt to locate the fort. "What they didn't tell us was that people had been looking for it for over 100 years," he remarked. Many other major universities had attempted to discover the fort before, and had never located it due to discrepancies in primary documents and maps and the modern layout of the land. Some thought the fort site had been washed away by the river or buried under the landfill created by the city in the 1930s-1960s. However, a search of the floodplain between the landfill and the river, implementing ground penetrating radar, magnetic prospecting, and numerous shovel test pits, yielded numerous 17th and 18th century artifacts. Convinced that this

was the site of Fort St. Joseph, Nassaney began excavation of the site in 2002, implementing a dewatering system of well points and pumps to lower the water table at the site so that proper archaeological investigation could take place.

After 7 years of excavation, mostly carried out by students in Western Michigan University's field school, the site is beginning to contribute greatly to the understanding of life on the frontier of New France. Project archaeozoologist, Dr. Terrance Martin, has identified 95% of the faunal remains at the site as wild animal remains, suggesting that perhaps the French adapted well to local food habits while living among the natives. This past summer, a foundation wall and two upright wooden posts were discovered at the site, providing evidence for the architectural styles in use at the site. The fort was a strategic post in the fur trade industry and was kept open in the early 18th century when many others were closed due to a glut of furs in French warehouses. It held an important position at the junction of the St. Joseph River and the Kankakee River portage, which was a direct connection to the Mississippi River. Excavations regularly lead to the recovery of various artifacts that point to the commercial, military, and religious functions of the fort. Much work still needs to be done on the site and the public is encouraged to participate and learn about the fort and its history through the project. Professor Nassaney wrapped up his presentation by mentioning that the university welcomes participation, saying "We know you're interested, and that's participation enough for me."

After the presentations, the group visited the Fort St. Joseph Museum, next door to the library. The museum houses most of the artifacts discovered by the project and some artifacts that were donated through the years by local collectors. Later, attendees were shown the gravesite of Father Allouez marked by a large granite cross and the monument erected in 1913 to mark the supposed site of Fort St. Joseph. At the Allouez gravesite, Professor Brandão discussed the history of the French presence in the region. The fort began as a mission, which was established by Father Jean Claude Allouez in the 1680s, and may have been a prominent native settlement before he arrived. Allouez is believed to have died in 1689 before the fort was completed in 1691. The monument up the road from the gravesite was placed there with much pomp and circumstance on July 4, 1913, despite confusion as to where the actual fort site was. The monument is a large 70-ton boulder found in a field and carved with the inscription "Fort St. Joseph 1691-1781." It has represented the site to the community for decades until archaeology revealed the actual location along the river.

Eighteenth-century attire was all the rage on Saturday evening when conference attendees were entertained by re-enactors, dancers, and storytellers.

The final stop was at the actual site of Fort St. Joseph where archaeologists with community groups have been recovering information about daily life along the banks of the river in the 18th century. The site has become a source of community pride. Professor Nassaney spoke about the significance of the site, discussed the excavation strategies, and answered questions about the fort. It was a wonderful conclusion to a successful conference, as attendees looked over the site and imagined what future research could reveal about the French settlement of Michigan and the people who lived there.

Message from the President

My love of history and archaeology dates back to high school days when my father used to take a classmate and me to Rhodes College in Memphis for lectures on classical archaeology. When I enrolled in college, my intent was to major in history and become a history teacher—a far cry from what I ultimately became, which was a vice

president of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Being president of the Center for French Colonial Studies from 2002 to 2009, and now having been elected to fill an unexpired term ending in October 2011, I am glad I can continue to be involved in a field of interest that I find so fascinating.

The major focus of the Board of Directors for over a year has been finding a new home for the Center for French Colonial Studies that has been housed at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, since 1998 and where the Center's daily operations are coordinated under the capable direction of Pierre Lebeau. Although Pierre's interest in history has in no way diminished, he is now retired from his professorship at North Central and would like to have someone else assume the responsibility for the Center's day-to-day operations. The Center is exploring a partnership with Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. We will advise you as soon as a determination is made.

Even with the emphasis on the Center's relocation, the members of the Board continue to be involved in various activities. The amount of the Carl Ekberg Research Grant is now $2,000, and we have been fortunate to have grant recipients selected who are bright young scholars with a keen interest in French colonial history in North America. Two recipients, Robert M. Morrissey and Guillaume Teasdale, now serve on the CFCS Board.

A new category of membership has been established for students. If a student is interested in learning more about French colonial history, he or she can join for $20 and receive *Le Journal* quarterly. Moreover, a student may attend our annual conferences at a reduced rate.

The book publishing business is undergoing far-reaching changes, and Benn Williams, Editor of the William L. Potter Extended Publications Series, is researching how the production and distribution of our Publication Series can benefit from these changes. In the days ahead we will be hearing more about the benefit these technological changes afford. The book chosen for publication in the Series this year is *Standing Up for the Indians* by Sharon Person, Professor of English at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park. It represents research done in St. Louis' Old Cathedral baptismal registers from 1766-1821 and is a new and different "bottom up" view of the Indian presence in early St. Louis.

I hope you have put the 2011 conference on your calendar. It will be held October 7-9 in Columbia, Illinois, with visits to nearby historic sites that will be of immense interest to our members. Columbia is located only a few minutes across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, so do plan to attend.

Wishing you a happy and prosperous 2011,

Ruth A. Bryant
President

Editor's Note

In this issue of *Le Journal* you can read about our annual fall conference in Michiana where we featured the French in Michigan and the archaeology of Fort St. Joseph. Attendance was good, the presentations engaging, and the weather was gorgeous. The lead article by Suzanne Sommerville is, as she notes, a cautionary tale to researchers who stray away from the original sources and rely on secondary ones. Being separated by our forebears by three centuries allows for all sorts of biases to creep into our understanding of the past. To paraphrase historian David Lowenthal, the past is a foreign country; they did things differently there. The challenge for us is to transcend the temporal divide and see the past as it was, not as we wish it to be. There is never a substitute for careful scholarship that assesses the accuracy and authenticity of the written word, and even brings new lines of evidence to bear on the questions at hand. For example, the issue of intercultural marriage and the offspring that resulted raises questions about the identities of so-called *Métis*. Did people of mixed ancestry see themselves as socially and culturally different than their parents? Did they identify with one group more than the other, depending on social setting and political exigency? Or was the world of 18th century New France, at least on the frontiers of the Empire, truly a middle ground—a world that was neither French nor Native but a curious blend of both, as Richard White has argued?

These questions are central to the research that is being conducted at Fort St. Joseph. Archaeological investigations have recovered evidence of Native-style artifacts interspersed within European-style buildings suggesting that Natives or *Métis* were seamlessly integrated into fur trade society. Clearly, both French and Natives had much to gain from each other and material exchanges led to alliances through which people extended their circles of kinship and genuinely cared for each other. Yet materials objects are constantly being reinterpreted, such that we cannot be certain that objects produced in Native or European hands fulfilled the functions intended by their makers or carried the same meanings when put to use. This remains a challenge that all researchers face as they attempt to convey information about what people did in the past and who did it.

Enjoy this issue of *Le Journal* and send me announcements regarding your activities related to French Colonial Studies. Future issues of *Le Journal* will feature more of the papers from the 2010 conference that explored what it meant to be French in Michigan when the western Great Lakes were a part of New France.

A bientôt,

Michael Shakir Nassaney

Announcements

The Center for French Colonial studies is soliciting proposals for the **2011 Carl J. Ekberg Research Grant**. For more

information see the Fall 2010 issue of *Le Journal* or the CFCS website.

Plans are underway for the **2011 annual conference of the Center for French Colonial Studies**, to be held in Columbia, IL (25 min. from St. Louis, MO), October 7-9. The setting will be the Toddhall Retreat and Conference Center, which is located in a lovely wooded setting. Lodging will be available at Toddhall, which has motel-type rooms with private baths and a dining facility. There will be tours to French Cahokia and Cahokia Mounds. The Friday night wine and cheese reception will be held at the Cahokia Courthouse, followed by a visit to the 1799 upright log church of the Holy Family. Sunday there will be the opportunity for a guided tour and visit to Cahokia Mounds, a World Heritage site, that also has French connections. Stay tuned for more information forthcoming in later issues of *Le Journal*.

The Interpretive Trail Panel for the Choctaw Trail of Tears through Camden, AR has been placed on a bluff at the site of the French trading post, E'core Fabre. This was the ferry crossing and steamboat landing on the Ouachita River during the Choctaw removal in the early 1830s. Chris Claybaker, the mayor of "The Queen City of the Ouachita," dedicated the panel this past October in conjunction with the **Ouachita/ Calhoun County Genealogical Society** meeting. The speaker was Dr. Ian Thompson, the Tribal Archaeologist from Durant, OK, who discussed the history of the Choctaw Tribe and their passage through Camden on the Trail of Tears in route to the new Indian Nation. E'core Fabre (now Camden) originated ca. 1780 as a French (Canadian) Trapper Trading camp on the Ouachita River, one of the best navigable steamboat rivers in Arkansas. The trader John Nunn and his family arrived at E'core Fabre in 1824. The first organization of early Union County was in his trading cabin in 1829. Camden's Ouachita County history is celebrated each March (3-20-2011) with the Daffodil Festival. For more information about the French presence in Arkansas or these events, contact CFCS member Worth Camp (e-mail: WorthCamp@sbcglobal.net phone: 870-862-1323).

The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project at Western Michigan University is currently preparing an illustrated booklet on the **Women of New France,** the theme of the 2010 archaeology summer lecture series and open house. Supported by the Michigan Humanities Council, the booklet will be the first in an occasional paper series designed to disseminate information about the history and archaeology of the French in North America. Publication is expected in Spring, 2011.

The Center for French Colonial Studies

Michael S. Nassaney, *Le Journal* editor
Guillaume Teasdale, book review editor

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Neither the editor of *Le Journal* nor the Center for French Colonial Studies assumes responsibility for errors of fact or opinions expressed by the contributors. The editor reserves the right to refuse submitted material and to edit material prior to publication.

Deadlines to submit announcements: 12/10, 3/10, 6/10, 9/10.

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