

**Early Frenchtown/River Raisin/Monroe Residents – Background and Underlying Sources**  
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In preparation for the 8 April 2017 Meeting of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan which celebrates the Bi-Centennial Celebration of the founding of Monroe County, I decided to compile a list of the earliest residents of present-day Monroe County.

My cut-off date for this list was 1796 which ties in with two documentary sources: the 1796 census and the property owners listed in the private claims filed for present-day Monroe County.

Included in each profile of the individuals or families is the following information if available. Genealogical information is generally not available in readily available sources for Americans or those of British descent unless they married French Canadians. In addition to these individuals, I have been unable to precisely identify other individuals with French-Canadian ancestry because the name is a common one and /or the genealogical information about these individuals in Denissen does not indicate a connection to River Raisin / Frenchtown / Monroe:

- The names of each spouse's parents
- Birth / baptismal dates and locations
- Marriage dates and locations. If the marriage record from a parish record is available on Ancestry or Genealogy Québec, the image of the marriage from the parish register is included. The Parish records from St. Antoine, River Raisin is not available on computer, therefore, the images are not included.
- Number of children
- Death / burial information if available
- Private claims information, including whether the individual owned the property prior to 1 July 1796 or filed a claim for the property.
- Whether the individual was enumerated in the 1796 census.

**Underlying Sources for Genealogical Information:**

Christian Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936* (Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, revised edition, 1987)

Drouin Collection from [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)

*Programme de recherche en démographie historique de l'Université de Montréal online:*  
<http://www.genealogie.umontreal.ca/Membership/en/PRDH/Recherche/Acte> (PRDH-IGD)

**Underlying Sources for Historical Information:**

Patrick M. Tucker and Denis Au, "Resurrection: Documenting the Early History of the Lost Parish of 'Saint-Antoine sur la Rivière-aux-Raisins' Part One: the Early Years, *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol.23 #3 (July 2002), pp. 109, 111-112:<sup>1</sup>

The River Raisin settlement grew rapidly between 1779 and 1788. The first to secure land there was Jean Baptiste Romain *dit* Sanscrainte who obtained land in May of 1779 followed by Joseph Porlier *dit* Béalque or Bénac who settled on Rivière-au-Sable (Sandy Creek) in 1780. François Pepin, George McDougall, Jr., Gabriel Godfroy, Sr., and Detroit merchants, George Meldrum and William Park, obtained land on Rivière-aux-Roches (Stony Creek) in 1786 and 1788. Robert Navarre *dit* Tonton and brother, François Marie Navarre *dit* Heutreau or Utreau, secured land

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<sup>1</sup> The first part of the article contains an image of the 15 May 1786 deed from the Potawatomi to Pierre Descompt *dit* Labady/Labadie. Also see: "Part II: A Holy Place during Evil Times" in the January 2003 issue of *MHH*, and Part 3: The Community and the Parish of River Raisin" in the July 2004 issue of *MHH*. Part 3 of the article contains the 1802 Tax List of River Raisin Residents.

from the Potawatomi Chief Chaholrenabet on the north side of the River Raisin measuring eight *arpents* in width. François Navarre *dit* Tchigoy (the proclaimed “founding father” of Monroe, Michigan), with brother Jacques Navarre, settled on the south side of the River in June of 1785. And, Angélique Campeau, daughter of Alexis Campeau who died in 1782, was given a tract of land four *arpents* wide on the south side of the River Raisin to name a few.

“On September 14, 1786, François Navarre obtained a piece of land from Chief Eskiby on the north side of the River Raisin (near downtown Monroe today).”<sup>2</sup> Tucker and Au noted that the site granted to Navarre was not used to the Church and that the 1789 Navarre-Anderson Trade post was built on this property.

On 15 October 1788, the Parish Assembly of the Settlement of the River Raisin petitioned Bishop Jean François Hubert, coadjutor of Québec, for a priest that would serve the residents. Following is the petition:<sup>3</sup>

We, before Porlier Benac, circuit justice of the peace, and in the presences of Fr. Frechette, priest and *Curé* of the parish of Ste. Anne of Detroit, assembled today to fulfill the wishes of Milord the Bishop who desires the new settlement of the River raisin to reach an agreement and choose a place where, in due time and at his pleasure, he may assign a *Curé* in accordance with the desire of the residents; that it why by common agreement we have chosen from the land of *M<sup>r</sup>. Mommini, Père*, the most suitable location, and have purchased one *arpent* and two perches of land of the aforesaid *M<sup>r</sup>. Mommini* for a price of 400 *francs*, and also a half-*arpent* which *M<sup>r</sup>. Joseph Hyvon* freely donated to provide a truly imposing monument, which all amounts to two and a half *arpents* plus two perches, which will furnish room for the church, rectory, etc., and this land will belong in perpetuity to the *Curé* and his successors, but without power of mortgaging or diminishing it in any way. And we flatter ourselves that the Bishop will take under consideration this new establishment which has no idea other than to remain in a religion which consideration this new establishment which has no other idea than to remain in a religion which should bring us happiness. As a group, and also as individuals, we are all bound to exert our efforts to fulfill such longed-for-desires. That is why we are going to work with all our power to begin a rectory, with the help of the Lord, will serve as a chapel awaiting the time when our resources will be sufficient to build a church at the orders of the *Curé* who will be sent to us, and begging that from time to time, as the seasons permit, Father Frechette will visit us and honor us with the Sacraments, of which we will try to be worthy, and we promise to forward the title to him at whatever station he pleases, to be at his disposal, and we hope that the Bishop will approve our dispositions by helping us to know and share in the graces and indulgences which he has the right to extend to true servants of the Lord. For that reason we place this document in the hands of Fr. Frechette who encourages us by the zeal which has led him to come and visit us.

We have all signed or made our marks today, October 15, 1788.

The following people signed with own hand: Jacques Gagnier, Charles Reaume, Porlier Benac, Louis Gaillard, Joseph Bordeaux, the *chevalier* de Chabert, Joseph L'enfant, *père*, Joseph L'enfant, *filis*, Joseph Pouget, Cicot.

Signed with their mark: Amable Belair, Jean Dubreuil, Baptiste Tailland, Louis LeDuc, Louis Devaux, Benjamin Mavar, Gabriel Godefroy, Baptiste Drouyard, Jean Louis LaJeunesse, Louis Susor, François Soudriet, Baptiste Couture, *père*, Pierre Tessier, Antoine Campeau, Joseph Mommini, Baptiste Couture, *filis*, Joseph Drouyard, François Thibault, François Gendron, Nicolas

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<sup>2</sup> Tucker and Au, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Tucker and Au, pp. 111-112.

Drouyard, Baptiste Monbain, Joseph Bien, Baptiste Lapointe, Jacques Prudhomme, Jean Baptiste Bissonet, Chrisostome St. Louis Villiers, Pierre Fournier, Jean François Dussault, Amable Maloux, *filis*, Joseph Hyvon.

This conforms with the signed original. Dilhet, *Curé*.

(Signatures:) Etienne Dubois, J.O. Hiraque, Hyacinthe Lajoie, François Deloeuil, Antoine Roberre.

Donna Valley Russell, *Michigan Censuses 1710-1830 Under the French, British, and Americans* (Detroit: DSGR, 1982). Russell failed to list the following individuals from her transcription of the census: Missing from the census summaries: Joseph Prudhomme, Basil Cousineau, Alexis [Descompt *dit*] Labady, Baptiste Gerauone, and Porlier Benac

*American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States . . . Vol. 1* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832) – contains claims in multiple states.

Claims are listed in numerical order based on the order in which they were considered by the land board. The index only refers to the person filing the claim, not to the owner before 1 July 1796, or to the witnesses, or neighbors. Names are not standardized.

Copies of American State Papers are available online from the following sources:

- **Hathi Trust** – my references refer to this source: <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1160.html>. An index appears at the beginning of the volume. Scrollable and searchable. The claims begin on p. 305
- **Google** Book: [https://books.google.com/books?id=i\\_I1AQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:JujDBXgTMNUC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjt-Nrx947TAhWN8oMKHbDcDTcQ6AEIoAEwFg#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=i_I1AQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:JujDBXgTMNUC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjt-Nrx947TAhWN8oMKHbDcDTcQ6AEIoAEwFg#v=onepage&q&f=false) downloadable as a PDF; searchable – the claims begin on p. 305
- **American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress** – link to the hyperlinked index: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(sp0283\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(sp0283))): pages are not scrollable, nor can you perform searches in the volume.

**Maps:** following are the links to download some of the maps I used in my preparation:

The Collot Map: see Suzanne Sommerville's article *Ribbon Farms with 1796 Map* about this map on the Land and Census Page on the FCHSM Website: [http://www.habitantheritage.org/french-canadian\\_resources/land\\_and\\_census\\_information](http://www.habitantheritage.org/french-canadian_resources/land_and_census_information)

Patrick McNiff's 1796 Map of the Detroit River Region: <http://seekingmichigan.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p129401coll3/id/668/rec/23>

Aaron Greeley's Corrected Map of the Private Land Claims: <http://seekingmichigan.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p129401coll3/id/831/rec/1>

Certificates issued to those whose claims were allowed by the Detroit Land Board: Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1246>

Bureau of Land Management: <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>