

“But I read it...”

Is Marie Françoise Alavoine, Wife of Jean Baptiste Chevalier, “of French and Menominee blood”?

(Fill in the blank: _____)

- A. in Tanguay; B. in Jetté; C. in Denissen, D. on PRDH; E. on the Internet;
F. in more than one of the above; G. in a source not named above

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In March of 2011, I happened to watch a Sunday morning news story on Fox TV Channel 2 about reporter Charlie LeDuff's search for his roots. Although the segment of his story that aired did not feature any French-Canadian ancestry, LeDuff mentioned that French Canada was part of his heritage and that his book-in-progress was available on the Web.¹ Of course, I had to read it. Part 2 contained his link to New France identified as the family of Jean [*sic*] Joseph Chevalier, his wife, Françoise Marthe [*sic*] Barton, and their son, Jean [*sic*, Jean Baptiste] Chevalier, who, LeDuff reports, “took a bride in 1709. Françoise Alavoine, of French and Menominee blood.” Although I had problems with other details LeDuff presents about New France, Fort Pontchartrain, and Michilimackinac, this statement stopped me cold because I knew it could not possibly be correct. The parts of the book available showed no sources, so I sent an e-mail to LeDuff, but he chose not to reply. What a pity! Ignoring my offer of documentary proof of Françoise Alavoine's “blood” will perpetuate a myth if it appears in his book. [2014 note: it didn't!]

I must admit I had the momentary thought that his source might have been someone unfamiliar with the genealogies of New France who saw the name *Alavoine* and interpreted it as coming from *FOLLE AVOINE*, wild rice, the name the French gave to the Menominee.² I, however, know New France sources very well. I sent LeDuff the following information from Programme de recherche en démographie historique de l'Université de Montréal online (PRDH):

Individual# 926

MARIE FRANCOISE ALAVOINE Status(es) : Immigrant

Father : CHARLES ALAVOINE

Mother : MARIE THERESE MACART

Family

Birth : 1691-09-30 St-Barthelemy, v. et ev. La Rochelle, Aunis (ar. La Rochelle, Charente-Maritime)

Death : 1756-03-19

Burial : 1756-03-20 Montréal

First marriage : 1709-04-08 Montréal

with

JEAN BAPTISTE CHEVALIER

Father : JOSEPH CHEVALIER

Mother : MARIE MARTHE FRANCOISE BARTON

Family

•BAPTISÉE LE 1691-10-02. LA DATE DE NAISSANCE ET LE BAPTÊME EN FRANCE DE CETTE IMMIGRANTE PROVIENNENT DU FICHER ORIGINE

[Baptized 1691 October 2. **The date of birth and the baptism record in France of this immigrant woman is from Fichier Origine.**] © PRDHwww.genealogy.umontreal.ca

Since PRDH indicated *Fichier Origine* as the source for the birth and baptism of Marie Françoise Alavoine, I visited this web site and found that a digital image of the baptism was available:

¹ http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/dpp/news/charlie_leduff/leduff%3A-my-detroit-story-part-2, accessed March 2011.

² “Glossaire des noms de tribus indiennes,” *Dictionnaire Biographique du Canada*, Vol. II (Les Presses de l'Université Laval and University of Toronto Press, 1969), entry for “Folle Avoine, en anglais Menominee, d'un mot algique significant gens du riz sauvage),” xxx. [The phrase “gens du riz sauvage” translates as people of Indian rice.] My personal copy of the book is the French language version, but it is also available in English.

Le deuxieme Jour d'Octobre del'An mil six Cent quatre vingt onze par moy
Vicaire de la Paroisse de St. Barthelemy Bousigne a este baptizee Marie Françoise
née le vingt de Septembre dernier Audit An fille de Charles Alavoine Marchand
et de Marie Machard sa femme a este parrain M^{re} Pierre Coustant Praticien de la
Marsaine demoiselle Françoise Diseux femme de M^r. M^{re}. Louis Prevost Conseiller
du Roy en l' Election de cette ville qui ont signé avec moy a la croix
Bove Mandeville Françoise diseux Coustant
Maisonneuve vic. de St. Barth Simon

The second day of October in the year sixteen hundred ninety-one by me
Vicar of the Parish of St. Barthelemy undersigned was baptized *Marie françoise*
born the twentieth of September last of the said year daughter of *Charles alavoine* merchant
and of *Marie Machard* his wife, godfather was M^{re}. Pierre Coustant *Praticien* [a legal aide] and
Godmother *demoiselle françoise Diseux* wife of M^r. M^{re}. *Louis Prevost* Counselor
of the King in *L' Election* of this town who signed with me. /signed/ *alavoine*
/signed/ *Bove? Mandeville* [with *paraph*] *françoise diseux Coustant* [with *paraph*]
Maisonneuve vic. de St. Barth
ff [?] Simon

Fichier Origine calls her an immigrant who arrived with her mother: “Migrante arrivée avec sa mère.”³ I was still curious, though, about LeDuff’s source. When I shared my experience with FCHSM member Judy Cartier in July, she indicated that she had seen the allegation of a Menominee ancestry somewhere, and she would check. It did not take her long to e-mail me that the source was probably *The Wisconsin Creoles* by Dr. Lester and Jeanne Rentmeester. Judy added: “I tracked these people down at their home in Florida since my research lists the birth place of Charles Alavoine as France. I asked them what was the source of their statement that Charles was a Menominee descendant and they said they didn’t know!” A Google search found this passage from the Rentmeester book, emphasis added by me:

Joseph Chevalier (b. 1644 in Normandy d. 26 May [sic] 1721 at Montreal) married Marthe-Francoise Barton (b. 1653 at Poitiers, France d. 13 Aug 1699 at Montreal). A son. Jean Baptiste (b. 6 Aug 1677 d. 1747) **married Marie-Francoise Alavoine Jasmin (born 1690 d. 20 [sic] Mar 1756). daughter of Charles Alavoine. a Menominee descendant.** and Marie Theresa [sic] Machard (b. 1664 d. 10 Oct 172B [sic]).⁴

³ <http://www.fichierorigine.com/detail.php?numero=240022> Modified 2011-3-24. Accessed again 14 August 2011. Parents: “Charles Alavoine, natif d’Amiens (Somme) et sa mère Marie Machard, native de Jarnac (Charente). Ses grands-parents paternels sont Jean Alavoine et Jeanne Heu, d’Amiens. Ses grands-parents maternels sont Jean Machard, maître chirurgien, et Élisabeth Broustier, de Jarnac (16167).” “Chercheur(s) [researchers] Jean-François Paboul; Jean-Paul Macouin.” “Natif” and “native” here refer to place of origin, Amiens and Jarnac, France.

⁴ <http://www.teamvanrens.com/wisconsin-creoles.html> L. and J. Rentmeester, “The Wisconsin Creoles: The Chevalier Family,” *The Wisconsin Creoles* (Melbourne, Florida: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1987). Spelling and punctuation are as copied. The spelling “Theresa” indicates at least one of their sources was Denissen.

Consider this “But I read it...” as a warning to anyone who claims Native American ancestry from Marie Françoise Alavoine. **The Chevalier and Alavoine families are most definitely rooted in the France of the seventeenth century.** The Rentmeester book is not at all reliable in this and other details I have seen.