

**“But I read it....”:
Who is the “porlier woman” at Fort St. Joseph in 1756?**

(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 none of the above

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The first part of the title of this article refers to what I have so often been told when I have researched families for others, once I provided results that varied from the published records they had seen. The truth is that the sources listed above—including the transcription and translation of the **St. Joseph des Illinois** (*sic*, now **Niles, Michigan**) registers that were published by the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 13 (1926-27)—are not infallible, although they are, without doubt, enormously valuable. The *MVHR* is now available online,¹ so this warning may be of use to researchers.

In the reading of one record, this is what the transcriber translated as what he or she saw:

page 228)

In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty six the twenty first of the month of january of the same year I Baptized joseph dumay legitimate son of jaques dumay and of marie Magdelaine chevallier his lawful wife. he had for godfather **joseph Porlier de Benac** and for godmother the **porlier woman** [*sic*] in testimony thereof the godfather signed with me the present entry the same day and year as above

jacque Dumay

Lamorinie jesuit

J. Porlier benac



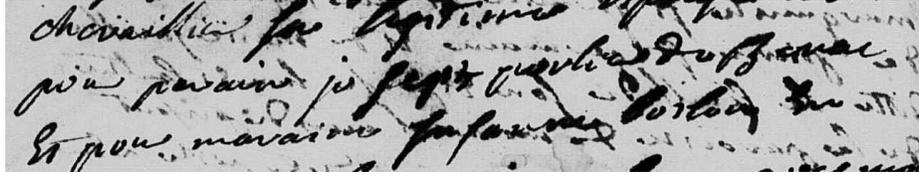
The J. Porlier benac signature

But the *MVHR* error is not the only misreading of the entry. Marthe Faribault-Beauregard,² in her published transcription written in French, has *son épouse, porlier's wife!* I, however, read *SuSanne boslon*, with the /s/ that looks like an /f/, not *femme* (woman), and certainly not "the porlier woman" or *son épouse*, his wife. Here is a digital image of the passage from FamilySearch:

¹ The St. Joseph records are not presented in consecutive order on the Glenn Black Miami site: (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>

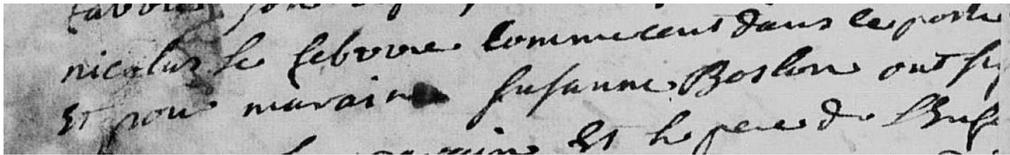
Digital images of the original records are available in the Drouin records at Ancestry and at FamilySearch Quebec Parish Records. My source for the images reproduced in this article is FamilySearch.

² Faribault-Beauregard, Marthe. *La population des forts français d'Amérique* (XVIII^e 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, where, or why she does this. Her work is a valuable secondary resource, nevertheless.



Pour parain joSeph porlier de Benac
As godfather joseph porlier de [sic] Benac
Et pour maraine SuSanne boslon
And as godmother Susanne boslon

The priest in this section is Father **Lamorinie**; two pages earlier he wrote *SuSanne Boslon*, with the same script for the first name. **The words are not sa femme.**



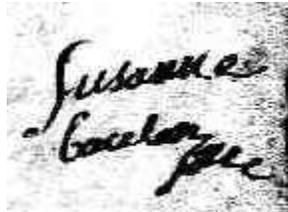
Baptism of *Michel girardin*, legitimate son of *Michel girardin* & *Marie hypolite*. 16 May 1755

[pour parein] Nicolas Le febvre commercant dans ce poste
[as godfather] nicolas Le febvre trader in this post
Et pour maraine SuSanne Boslon
And as godmother Susanne Boslon

A Susanne *Boslon* appeared several times as godmother, including the following, on 21 January 1759:

In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty nine I the undersigned Baptized according to the rules of our Holy mother the church felicite St germain legitimate daughter of pierre St germain at present a resident of this post and of felicite javillon his wife. she had for godfather francois Longval and for godmother susanne boslon. the said child born the 17 of january of the said year 1759. in testimony thereof I signed today the 21 of january of the present year 1759 at St joseph

Susanne signed this record *Susanne*



baulon, an alternate spelling:

A Susanne Boslon/Baulon/Bolon had been baptized at Fort St. Joseph on 30 November 1726, daughter of Susanne Ménard (Maurice Ménard and Madeleine Couc) and Gabriel Bolon, who was a soldier at Fort St. Joseph. Another Bolon daughter, Marie Susanne, was born 19 January and baptized 24 April 1740. I am not sure which Susanne served as godmother in the 1759 record that was signed. In the earlier records, the *Susanne* could not write but did make the mark of a cross. In any event, she certainly was not Porlier's woman or wife; nor was any other known woman in 1756. The references to a "Porlier woman," and/or to an "épouse" for Porlier, may have led the compilers of the Denissen³ books to "marry" Porlier to a "wife" that he never had. But that's a subject for another "But I read it...!"

³ Denissen, Rev. Fr. Christian. *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936*, Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987 revision. [1701-1911 in the 1976 edition.]