

Concessions in Early French *Détroit*: 1730s and 1740s
Suzanne Boivin Sommerville, FCHSM member

Le Détroit in 1721

In “Given at Quebec this 4th of November, 1721,” entitled “Cadillac Again Petitions to Be Put in Possession of Detroit,” Governor-general Vaudreuil’s annotation reads: “In this stretch of land to the northeast of the fort [are, in 1720-21,] ... four [original] concessions granted by **M. de La Mothe** to the (persons) named **Delorme [François Fafard dit Delorme]**, **Desrochers [Jacob de Marsac dit Desrochers]**, **M. Aubin [Jean Casse dit St-Aubin]**, and the **widow [of François] Beusseron [Marie Lepage, whose second marriage was to Joseph Vaudry]**,” but all “the houses [are] within the fort.” Vaudreuil then adds “There are no Frenchmen [with conceded land in 1721] except the four named above, each of whom has two *arpents* frontage [by 20 *arpents* deep].”¹ He continues: “Last year [1720] he [**Alphonse de Tonty**, commandant at the time] made all the settlers bring him their concession contracts, which they did; and he has kept most of them.... All this ill treatment has compelled the petitioners to withdraw, some to the Miamis & some to Montreal, until His Majesty shall give other orders concerning it.”²

Five years earlier, in **1716** in Paris, the *Conseil de Marine* had deliberated concerning the *poste de Détroit* and, as described in the summary provided by Library and Archives Canada, decided that

the sixty [*sic*] concessions that had been given by Lamothe Cadillac “should not be in existence, as much because those to whom they were given were obliged to abandon them in fear of being killed by Indians and [that], for this reason, we should not make another establishment other than to maintain a garrison. ” ... “The Conseil believes that these concessions ... are of no value” but that it is right [in justice] to give new ones **from the king** to those who have satisfied the conditions by which [those persons granted concessions] were obliged.³

The years after Cadillac left in the spring of 1711, especially during the Fox Wars that began in 1712 and just before and after 1716, had been filled with uncertainty. Many who had initially been granted property abandoned the area, although trading continued, as documented by hiring contracts of employees and traders destined for the fort;⁴ and, for some years, not even a priest was present (late June 1714 to late June 1715, late 1716 to early June 1717, and most of August 1718 to early November 1719),⁵ so that by the 1721 reference above, only four individuals were associated with the land said to have been granted by Cadillac. The inhabitants of the *poste de Détroit*, however, petitioned for evidence of their right to their lands outside of the fort. It would take more than another ten years.

On a **1731** map, these are the individuals indicated as still having land at *Détroit*.

¹ *Michigan Pioneer Historical Collections*, hereafter *MPHC*, Vol. 33: 679-80. I have also seen the original documents.

² *MPHC*, 33: 695-702, extracts from the memorial and reply, referenced as Vol. 9, p. 1812, on 702.

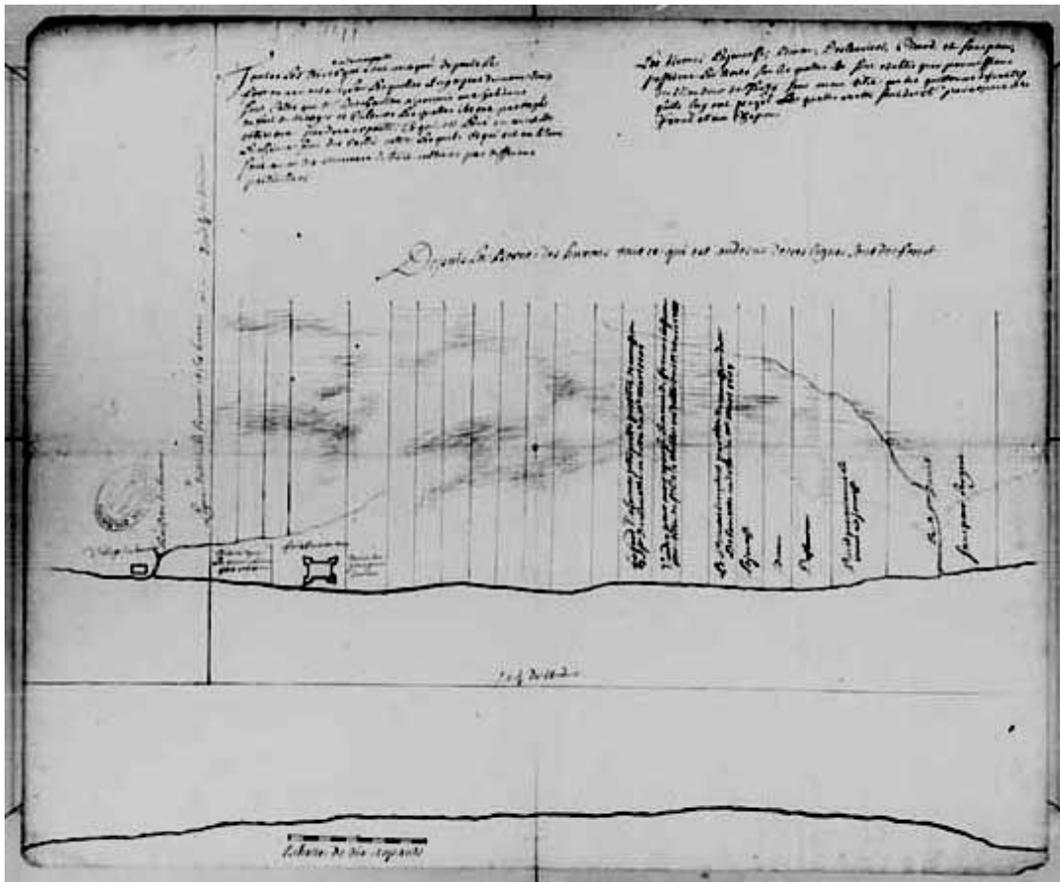
³ Library and Archives Canada, hereafter, LAC, Mikan no. 3075617, 1716, avril, 28, *Délibération du Conseil de Marine au sujet du poste de Détroit*, my translation and underlining.

⁴ See Diane Wolford Sheppard’s “Engagé Contracts to Détroit – 24 August 1712 to 2 April 1721 – Part 1,” *MHH*, Oct. 2012, and “Part 2, 5 April 1721 to 22 May 1731,” Jan. 2013. These are part of a series of such lists.

⁵ The dates are the result of my examination of the extant original records. Priests travelling to settlements on the Mississippi paused at the fort early in August of 1718 to administer religious rites for events that occurred while no priest was present. See pages 63-67 of original Ste. Anne de Detroit registers.

- No occupation of land near the fort until **Fafard** [François Fafard *dit* Delorme,⁶ 1707 contract from Cadillac], on the north east shore, a repeat from 1721, next to
- **Vaudry** [Joseph Vaudry] to the east, repeat from 1721, by virtue of his marriage to Marie Lepage [widow of François Beausseron who received the original grant from Cadillac]
- **Blank** [formerly held by Gouriou (Jean Baptiste Gouriou *dit* Guignolet) from Cadillac],
- **Marsac** [Jacob de Marsac *dit* Desrochers, repeat from 1721, contract from Cadillac]
- **Lajeunesse** [Pierre Estève *dit* Lajeunesse, contract from Cadillac, 10 mars 1707]
- **Bineau** [Jean Bineau *dit* Lajeunesse;]⁷
- **Deslauriers** [Pierre Duroy *dit* Deslauriers, granted by Cadillac 10 March 1707]
- **widow Lajeunesse** [possibly widow of Pierre Estève *dit* Lajeunesse *fils*, the son, who died at about 23 years old, 24 March 1731, buried in church. He had married Marie Desforges, widow of François Picard, 24 Nov 1729 in Detroit.]⁸
- **Blank space** including **Rivière à Parent** [later called Bloody Run after 1763]
- **Sanspeur sergent** [Simon Gilbert *dit* Sanspeur, just east of Rivière à Parent and farthest from the fort, granted land by Tonty]

Detroit in 1731



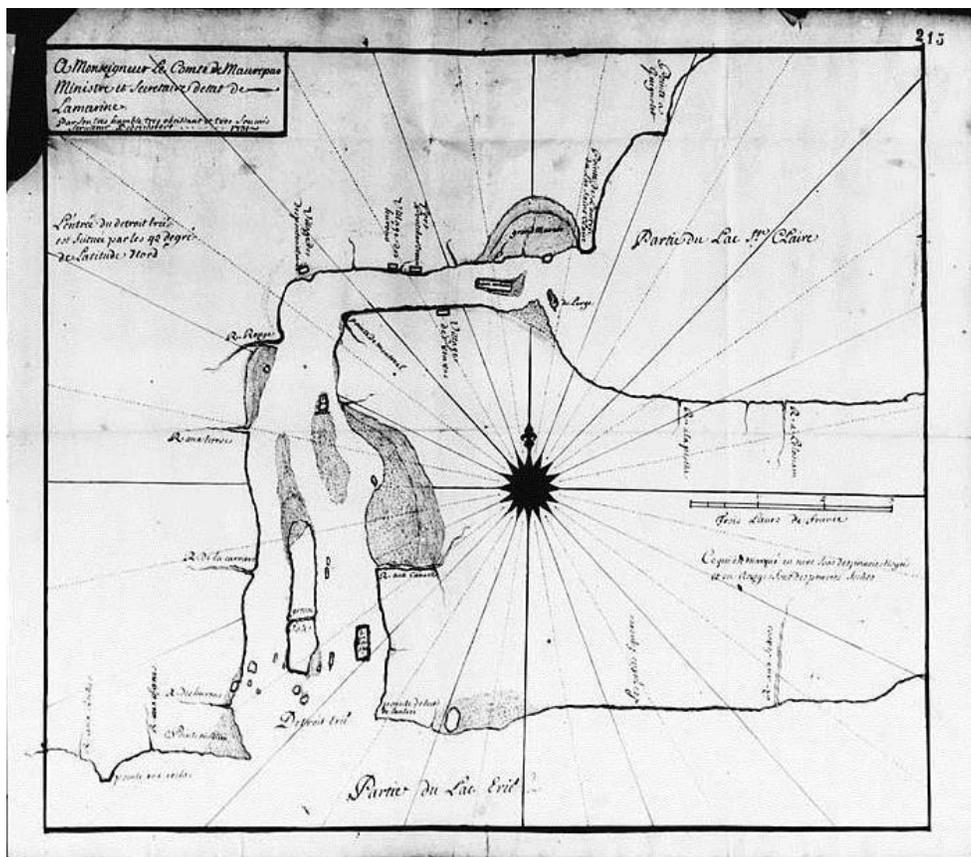
⁶ François Fafard *dit* Delorme, *interprète de ce lieu* [interpreter of this place], about 80 years, 28 January 1734, buried in cemetery.

⁷ Thank you to Gail Moreau-DesHarnais for this suggestion. Jean *Binau*, about 72 years, 18 November 1747, was buried in church and Mikan 3066761, mentions name for 1726-1727, Jean *Binau*.

⁸ Thank you to Gail Moreau-DesHarnais for this suggestion.

A much cleaner version is in Brian Leigh Dunnigan, *Frontier Metropolis, Picturing Early Detroit, 1701-1838* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), page 29, fig. 2.8. Dunnigan dates it as 1731 and identifies it as the first known map to show the “ribbon” farm development outside of the fort. In 1731, the Fafard land was next to the land originally granted in 1707 to François Beausseron, whose property was held, as noted above, in 1721, in the name of his widow, Marie Lepage, and then, in 1731, in the name of her second husband, Joseph Vaudry, by virtue of his having married the widow Beausseron. Source for manuscript image: Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN no. 3076148, Plan relatif à des concessions de terres à Détroit.

Next is another 1731 map, shown in Dunnigan in a colored version, page 28, Fig. 2.7. The digital image is from National Archives of Canada (NAC) MIKAN no. 2487451, Manuscript map showing the establishment of *le Détroit* (the whole strait) and surroundings. It is addressed to the Minister of the marine by Henri Louis Deschamps de Boishébert, commandant of Détroit.



1731

Pointe à Guignolet (now Gaukler Point at Nine Mile and Jefferson, St. Clair Shores) is identified in the upper right corner on **Lac St^e. Claire**. No one has land in the present-day Grosse Pointes, the “point” being named on this map as *Pointe de l'entrée de Lac Sainte Claire*, Point at the entry of *Lac Sainte Claire*. Parent Creek is just visible at modern-day Elmwood Cemetery before the *Grand Marais*, Big Swamp, in modern-day East Side of Detroit between fort and Belle Isle. *Village des Hurons* appears next to the fort downriver, with a small stream between them. *Village des Poutawatomis* is at the modern Ambassador Bridge across from *Pointe de Montréal*. The *Village des Ottawa* is across the river between the fort and *Isle aux Cochons* (Belle Isle). Downriver, other streams can be seen: *R. Rouge*, *R. aux Ecorses*, and *R. de la Carrière* (where stone could be excavated, modern-day Brownstown). On the opposite shore: *R. aux Canards*. This is the landscape that awaited the concessions of 1734.

1734 Concessions

List of the concessions given in Canada ... as much in *fiefs* as in *censives* by Misters the *Marquis de Beauharnois*, governor general of Canada, and *Hocquart*, *intendant*, between 1731 as far as and including 1734.⁹ The first section, folios 177 to 189v, deals with concessions other than at Detroit, which begins at folio 190, my translation:

[folio 190] According to the information given by the inhabitants of *Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit du Lac Erié* to *Monsieur de Boishebert* [Henri Louis Deschamps de Boishébert] Captain of a Company of a detachment of the marine formerly commandant at the said fort Pontchartrain and *Péan* [Jacques Hugues Péan] *chevalier* of the military order of St Louis, Major of the city and government of Quebec, at present commandant at the said fort and of which he has sent us an accounting, which includes [that] until now they [the inhabitants] had not dared to undertake the clearing of the land [*défrichments*] to establish the [plantable] land at the said place, because they did not have any **title** that would have assured them [their right] to the property; that if we are pleased to give them this [title to the land], they would be not only in a position to work the land without running the risk of being [fol. 190v] worried [about their claim being denied], but which would as a result of their labor produce considerable advantages by obtaining for them in this said place *des vivres* [crops] [~~in abundance~~ crossed out words] from which they can survive, as much for the garrison as for the inhabitants and voyageurs.

Having regard for this [and] considering the *Lettres Patentes* of His Majesty given at Paris in the month of April 1716 registered with the *Conseil Superieure* the following December [which cancelled all concessions at Detroit], the decrees [*arrets*] of the *Conseil d'Etat du Roy* of 19 May 1722, We in the name of the King have given, accorded, and ceded, give, accord, and cede, under title of *cens et rentes* from now until forever to **Chauvin** on *le detroit* **two arpents** in front by **forty** in depth, on one side toward the E N E [East North East] as far as the land of [fol. 191] the man named **Fafard Delorme**, who holds it from *S' Delamothe Cadillac* by contract of 10 March 1707, bordered by a line N N O [North North West] to S S E [South South East] and on the other side by the land not yet conceded [in 1734], in front by *Le Detroit du Lac Erié* and in its depth by a line E N E [East North East] and O S O [West South West] joining in the same way the land not yet conceded [in 1734], to be enjoyed, developed, and disposed of by the said Chauvin, his heirs, and those having cause, under the charges, clauses, and conditions stated below, *Scavoir* [as follows]:

that the said Chauvin, his heirs, and those having cause will be held to carry their grains to be milled at the common windmill [*Moulin banale*] when they will have produced them, under pain of confiscation of the grains and any arbitrary penalty [*arbitraire*, not fixed by law, subject to change and the will of the Sovereign]; to hold and to have held *feu et lieu* [establish a residence and dwell there] within a year at the latest; recognize [and respect?] the land cleared [*deserts*] by his neighbors, as needed [for them] to cultivate the land; and the said Chauvin to allow [*souffrir*] [Fol. 191v] the roads that will be found necessary for the good of the public; build fences [*mitoyant*, separating the properties] as it will be ordered; to pay each year to the *Receveur du Domaine* [tax collector] of his Majesty in this country or to the clerk [*commis*] of the *Receveur* who will reside *au detroit*, one *sol* of *cens* for each *arpent* at the front, and twenty *sols* of *rente* for each twenty *arpents en superficie* [in circumference], amounting to, for the said two *arpents* by twenty [*arpents*] in depth, **four livres of rente**, and in addition a *demi-minot de bled*

⁹ LAC, "Liste des concessions données en Canada ... tant en fiefs qu'en censives par Mrs le Marquis de Beauharnois, gouverneur général et Hocquart, intendant, depuis 1731 jusques et compris 1734". Original: Volume 462, fol. 177-200v. {Detroit concessions on 190-200v} MIKAN no. 2318948.

froment [about a half bushel of wheat]¹⁰ for the said two *arpents* in front, all of this payable each year on the day of the feast of St. Martin, for which the first year will be due 1st November 1735 and will continue year to year, the said *cens* subject to *lods* and *ventes* [costs when the property is sold, and] penalties for default or infractions [*portent profit de lods et ventes défaut et amende*], with all other Royal and *Seigneurial* rights when due according to the *Coutume de la Prevosté et Vicompte de Paris* [Custom of Paris, which regulated all legal matters.] It will nevertheless be permissible to pay [fol. 192] the said **four livres** of *rente* and the *sol* of *cens* in *Pelletries* [animal furs or skins] at the price [existing] at Detroit, until the time that there will be a currency [type of cash money] established [there]. Reserving in the name of the King all the standing woods on the habitation that His Majesty [*Sa Majesté*, feminine in French] might have need of for carpentry and the construction of *batiments* [buildings, boats, or ships] in such a manner that [*elle*, His Majesty] will establish hereafter, as well as His [the King's] property, mines, metals [*minieres*], and minerals, if any are found in the area of the said concession; and the said Chauvin, his heirs, and those having cause will be held to make a survey immediately of the alignment, the extent, and the boundaries of the said Concession in all of its width and depth at his expense, and to execute all of the clauses contained in this present **Title**, and to take a *Brevet* of Confirmation from His Majesty [letter from the King confirming the concession] within two years, all of this under penalty of nullification of these presents. Made and given at Montreal sixteen June 1734 signed *Beauharnois* and *Hocquart*

Translation by Suzanne Boivin Sommerville

The 16 June 1734 concession to Chauvin gives the full description of the terms that apply to all seventeen of the 1734 concessions in *terres en censive à Détroit* that follow, as identified on a summary¹¹ document: “[Chauvin, missing on the summary!] **Philis, Pierre Estève dit La Jeunesse, Bissault** [*sic*, **Binault**], [**Jean**] **Louis Campot** [**Campau**], **Marsac Desrochers, Jean Chapoton, Pierre Meloche, Jean Gilbert, Jacques Campaux** [**Campau**], **Moran, Labutte** [**Pierre Chesne dit Labutte**], **La Déroute** [**Seguin dit Ladéroute**], **Chesne** [**Charles Chesne**], **Saint-Aubin, Pierre Saint-Aubin, François (Lauson)**” All of these concessions are on the east side of the fort on the North shore. Use *Rivière à Parent* (Bloody Run) as a location marker for modern maps.

The Location of the Seventeen 1734 Concessions

Chauvin, *est nord est* [east north east] of **Fafard Delorme** granted by Cadillac 10 Mars 1707 [and 18 to 20 *arpents* east of the fort in 1731]

Philis, 2 *arpents* next to Chauvin [apparently twelve or fourteen *arpents* from the fort. See 1731 map.] **east north east** of Chauvin [So the 1734 concessions started at the limit of the earlier concessions to the east toward the *Grand Marais*, Big Swamp. See the other 1731 map.]

Pierre Estève dit La Jeunesse, 2 *arpents ouest sud ouest* [west south west] of **Marsac Desrochers** conceded 10 mars 1707 by Cadillac

Binault, 2 *arpents ouest sud ouest* [west south west] of Pierre Estève

Louis Campot, [*sic*] [**Jean**] **Louis Campaux** [*sic*] 5 *arpents sud sud est* [south south east] of Binault

Marsac Desrochers, [*sic*] Marsac Desrochers *Père*, the father, 4 *arpents* E.S.W. [east south west?] of Chapoton [This appears to be a new concession. A 1749 map shows two for the family, with Pierre Chesne *filis*, the son, between them.]

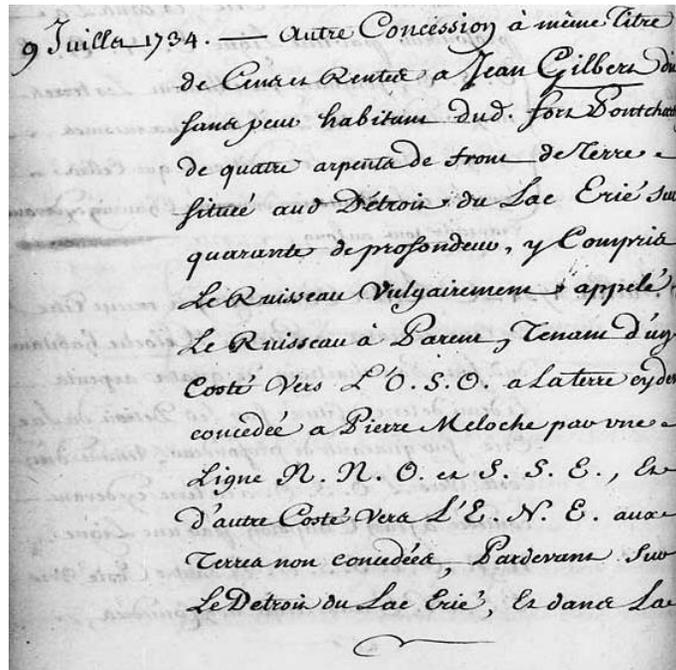
Jean Chapoton, 3 *arpents ouest sud ouest* [west south west] next to Marsac

¹⁰ A “minot” is a unit of dry volume equal to approximately 40 liters, and one liter equals 0.908 dry quarts. Jack Verney, *The Good Regiment* (McGill-Queen's University Press, Montréal: 1991) 129. See also <http://www.convert-me.com/en/convert/volume/fminot.html>

¹¹ LAC, MIKAN no. 3051564. The summary shows the archives' readings of the names.

Pierre Meloche, 5 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Jean Chapoton

Jean Gilbert [sic] on folio 195v [Jean Gilbert dit Sanspeur], 4 arpents [including *Le Ruisseau à Parent*, Parent Creek, later called Bloody Run, now in Elmwood Cemetery], ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Pierre Meloche. [This is an important landmark. It became known as **Bloody Run** after the Pontiac Ottawa battle with the British there in 1763.]



Jean Gilbert dit Sanspeur: includes *Le Ruisseau vulgairement appelé Le Ruisseau à Parent*
«vulgairement appelé» translates as commonly called *Le Ruisseau à Parent*

Jacques Campaux, [sic] [Jacques Campeau Père, the father], 4 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Jean Gilbert dit Sanspeur

Moran, folio 196v, 4 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Jacques Campaux

Labutte, folio 197, [Pierre Chesne dit Labutte] 3 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Moran

La Déroute [Seguin dit Ladéroute], 4 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Labutte

Chesne, Charles Chesne, 4 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of La Déroute

Saint-Aubin [sic], Saint Aubin Père, the father, arpents [no number given, but the full summary sheet appears to read 2 arpents] ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Chesne

Pierre Saint-Aubin, Pierre Saint Aubin fils, the son, 3 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Saint Aubin père (These last two might be in the area of modern-day St. Aubin Street)

François (Lauson) [sic] François Lauson, 4 arpents ouest sud ouest [west south west] of Pierre Saint Aubin

This last concession appears to have been the one nearest the fort in 1734. Guillaume Teasdale's Ph.D dissertation adds this detail concerning these sixteen concessions:

In 1734, sixteen [in addition to Chauvin] other tracts of land were granted on the north shore of the Detroit River.

Footnote: 202 Thirteen of these grants were once more confirmed the following year. Arrêt qui ordonne d'enregistrer le brevet de ratification des concessions faites aux nommés Chauvin, Tily ??? [sic, **Philis, Jacques Desmoulins dit Philis**], Pierre Esteve dit Lajeunesse, Bineau, Meloche, Gilbert dit Sanspeur, Jacques Campeau père, Moran, François Lauzon, Labutte, Ladéroute, Chesne, Saint-Aubin père et Saint-Aubin fils au fort Pontchartrain de Détroit, 26 septembre 1735, BANQQ, Fonds Conseil Souverain, cote TP1,S28,P18227.¹²

Seigneurial System

Contrary to what you will sometimes read, the *Seigneurial System*, as it developed in New France, was not feudalism. It can be more accurately compared, for a modern mind, to a cooperative apartment or condominium system. It was a plan to assign and manage land grants from the king in an efficient manner under pioneer conditions. The king “owned” all land.

A *seigneur* (landlord) received land—without paying any money—from the 100 Associates in the early period and, after 1663, from the Crown. Tenure was that of *Foi et Hommage*. A *seigneur* or *seigneuresse* (landlady; there were some, but I will use the masculine form of pronouns) was literally required to formally swear allegiance to the king in a legal ceremony. He accepted the obligation to have the land cleared within a time limit or forfeit his title and the property held in his name. Others could then purchase or be granted the *seigneurie*.

A *seigneur* recruited tenants, who were called *censitaires*. The *seigneurs* allotted land, without cost at first, to the *censitaires*. The property was usually three *arpents* in width along a river or common road, at varying depths, and a seigneur received a small payment for the use of the land and for the services he was to provide. These plots of land laid out in narrow ribbons were sometimes called *cotes* or *rangs*. The *censitaire* paid *cens* and *rentes* yearly, just as in a cooperative or condominium system an owner of a unit pays fees, usually monthly, to the developer and sometimes also a mortgage to a bank. The *censitaires*, however, were free *habitants*, inhabitants, not serfs or peasants. They could not be removed so long as they maintained a hearth or home there, worked the land, and paid the fees. Annually, this was about two *sols / sous* an *arpent*, close to an English acre, sometimes paid in small animals or produce. When the land was sold, one twelfth of the sale price went to the *seigneur*. This was called *lods et ventes*. Owners of land in a *seigneurie* could have more than one piece of property, even in different *seigneuries*, pass them on to inheritors—including wives and daughters—sell them, or hire a *fermier*, a person under contract, to work the land in return for stipulated payments.

The seigneur had certain rights, called *banalités*, not all of which were actually demanded. The *censitaire* was obliged to:

- 1) grind his grain at the mill of the *seigneur*
- 2) bake bread at the *seigneurial* oven (almost never enforced)
- 3) give the *seigneur* every eleventh fish caught in the river
- 4) dance around the May-pole to honor the *seigneur* each springtime
- 5) serve in the various *corvées*, work crews.

¹² December, 1710, granted by York University, Toronto, Ontario. I thank Guillaume Teasdale for sharing his doctoral dissertation. His unraveling and documentation of the property concessions is the best I have seen. It extends into the British period at Detroit.

When called to a *corvée*, the tenant would give personal service (about six days a year) for such things as building common roads or bridges. This *banalité* could be purchased with money, thus exempting wealthier tenants from performing the task.¹³

Gustave Lanctot adds that the *seigneur*, as his responsibility, was required to “maintain a dwelling on his property, to preserve oak trees for naval construction, to report mines or minerals discovered, to reserve land for roads”¹⁴ He concludes: “The tenant was certainly not exploited; for a holding of 120 *arpents*, free of all further charges, he paid about 173 *sous* a year.”¹⁵ Or 8.65 *livres*. A *livre* contained 20 *sous* or *sols*, and one *sou* or *sol* contained 12 *deniers*.¹⁶

Towns and villages were also developed as *seigneuries* with smaller plots of lands for houses and sometimes gardens, and some *seigneurs* were religious orders, particularly Jesuits and Sulpicians.

To compare the situation at Detroit with an example in the mother colony, my ancestor Robert Réaume had four *arpents* along the Rivière-des-Prairies by twenty *arpents* deep and an additional four *arpents* by twelve *arpents* extending inland. On the waterside property he had a house, a barn, a stable, and thirty *arpents* in cultivation. On one side was Desnoyers and on the other Jean Monnet.¹⁷ Robert Réaume¹⁸ was buried 24 March 1744 at Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, just months before his daughter Judith's wedding. His wife Elizabeth Brunet *dite* Belhumeur was buried four years later, 20 July 1748.

Judith's uncle, Nicholas Réaume, also lived on Ile-Jésus, on three *arpents* with a house, barn, stable, and four *arpents* of workable land in the middle of the island at a place called Côte-St-François between four *arpents* not yet conceded and the property of Louis Pasquet.¹⁹ **The habitants paid “deux sols de cens et rentes, par chaque arpent en superficie,”²⁰ two sols of cens et rentes for each square arpent.**

According to historian W. J. Eccles, one *livre* was worth about \$10 in 1982 Canadian dollars. Of course, that value is approximate, and must be adjusted to obtain 2014 values. Whatever the value, though, it was nowhere near two-thirds of the farm's production, and, in Detroit, payment could be made with animal pelts, because actual money was scarce.

I mention the figure of “two-thirds” of the farm's production because this is the amount that is extracted from the inhabitants of Detroit from a fictional “Seigneur Dubois” in an on-line, award-winning game called “Building Detroit” at the website of The Detroit Historical Society <http://detroithistorical.org/buildingdetroit/>

The game begins in 1750, and features a man and wife recently arrived from France, not a French-Canadian couple, which would have been much more accurate for 1750. Both the proportion demanded as *seigneurial* dues and the fictional “Seigneur Dubois” are errors, as **there were no seigneurs at Detroit**. The first royal notary, **Robert Navarre**, served as the *receveur* / tax collector for many, many years at

¹³ Charles W. Colby, *Canadian Types of the Old Régime 1608-1698*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1908. Note: Considerable further research has taken place since the 1908 publication of this work, but these details are accurate.

¹⁴ Gustave Lanctot, *A History of Canada*, Volume 2: From the Royal Régime to the Treaty of Utrecht, 1663-1713, Cambridge University Press, 1964, 54.

¹⁵ Lanctot, 55.

¹⁶ Christiane Perron, *La vie d'un pionnier de l'Ile d'Orléans*, Longueuil: Christiane Perron, 1989, 232.

¹⁷ Abbé J.-Urgel Demers, *Aperçus Historiques sur L'Ile Jésus*, L'Atelier, 1957, 239.

¹⁸ Robert Réaume accompanied Madame Cadillac to Fort Pontchartrain in 1701. See Gail Moreau-DesHarnais's articles in *MHH*.

¹⁹ Demers, *Aperçus*, 251.

²⁰ Demers, *Aperçus*, 233, in listing of Pierre Payet.

Detroit. In addition, the map for the game shows no evidence of Ste. Anne de Detroit (or any church) and has the inhabitants trading directly with the Indians on the riverside. Whoever created this game, while it is “fun” to play, had no idea of the factual details concerning Detroit in 1750. I pointed out these errors in 2012; but, like so many others, they apparently will not be corrected. It is, after all, just “a game”.

Concessions in 1736

Guillaume Teasdale presents the owners of grants in 1736 in connection with their marital status:

In 1736, sixteen other tracts of land were granted in the Côte du Nord-Est. Ten of their grantees established roots on their properties. Four of them were already married to Frenchwomen: **Jacques Cardinal Sr.** and **Pierre St-Cosme** had moved to Detroit with their families in the late 1720s whereas **Charles Bonhomme dit Beaupré** and **Philippe Daniau** had married Frenchwomen at Detroit.²¹ Four other grantees of 1736 who settled on their tracts of land married Frenchwomen at Detroit in the 1740s and 1750s.²²

These four he identifies as “**Claude Campau, Jacques Casse dit Saint-Aubin, Gaëtan Séguin dit Ladéroute, and Pierre Laurent St-Cosme.**”²³ Teasdale adds: “The two remaining grantees, **Jacques Cardinal Jr.** and **Gabriel Casse dit Saint-Aubin,** seemingly never married. The first died at age 24 while the second died at age 63.²⁴ After 1736, “the grants of 1734 and 1736 extended more than 120 arpents (seven kilometres) east of the fort. They reached the area where Engel Memorial Park is located today.”²⁵ This park is at what was called Presqu’Isle²⁶ and may be seen on the Chaussegros de Léry 1749 map.

Concessions in the 1740s

The following report dated **5 June 1745** describes the stages by which Antoine Laumet *dit* de Lamothe Cadillac and his family attempted to regain property left at *le Détroit*, both real and personal, when Cadillac was ordered to go to *Louisiane* in 1710 and left the fort early in 1711 for the mother colony:

The President of the *Conseil de Marine* to MM. de Beauharnois and Hocquart. *Le Sieur de Cadillac* having been obliged to leave *le Détroit* to go to *Louisiane*, had to abandon the establishments he had brought into being. His widow and his children suppose [*prétendirent*] that the post had been given to him under the title of a *Seigneurie*. After an examination of their presumptions [*prétentions*], in 1733 [three years after Cadillac died], they were again advised [*renvoyés*] to go to develop the properties [*les faire valoir*] on the spot [at *le Détroit*]. This affair remained at this point, but the son of *sieur La*

²¹ Teasdale, 247 and footnote 55.

²² Teasdale, citing Denissen, footnote 55. “For more details about the deeds confirming their land grants, see BANQQ, Fonds Intendants; LAC, Recensements et documents, vol. 462, fol. 267-268, 269-270, 273-274, 281-282.”

²³ Teasdale, 247, footnote 56.

²⁴ Teasdale, footnote 57, citing Denissen. In this section of the dissertation, Teasdale examines the extent to which the settlers at Detroit united with Indian women and concludes on page 266: “The evidence does not support the idea that French-Indian intermarriage was frequent in the Detroit colony, yet several observers apparently mistook ‘cultural métissage’ for ‘miscegenation’ and believed the latter to be common.” And on page 268: “French-Indian intermarriage occurred in the Detroit River region but it never became a significant phenomenon, like in other parts of the Great Lakes, especially not among land holders.”

²⁵ Teasdale, 71.

²⁶ Teasdale, 72, footnote 213, “The presqu’isle described by Léry was actually called ‘la petite Presqu’Isle’ by the locals. Par devant Navarre notaire royal, 22 mai 1776, BHC, Robert Navarre Papers.”

Mothe de Cadillac [**Joseph de Lamothe Cadillac**, born at the fort in 1702],²⁷ having once more requested [to consider the matter again], it is very easy [or “we are pleased,” *bien aise*] to inform them about the subject. **The command that the father had at this post did not confer on him the rights to a *Seigneurie***, nor [the right] to grant concessions, because those that he conceded were declared null by *Lettres Patentes* [letters issued by the king] in **1716**. Even he [Cadillac] did not pretend to have this right, such that in **1720** he obtained *un brevet* [letter from the king granting a favor] that conceded to him the lands on which he had erected buildings outside the perimeter of the fort and the lands that he had cleared [*défrichées*], with the requirement that he mark [the limits] of his lands and to report this information in a *procès verbal* [formal written report by a qualified person] in 2 years, which he did not do. Since [the issuing of] this *Brevet*, it appears he [Cadillac] requested to be reimbursed for his expenses and, in any case, to be reestablished in receiving revenue [*renter*] from his possessions [*biens*, at the fort]. Upon these new demands, he was ordered by the ruling [*arrêt*] of **19 May 1722**, that the *brevêt* of 1720 would be implemented and that he would enjoy, in addition, the right to hunt and fish on his lands, that he would be put back into possession of the physical objects [*meubles*] that belong to him and that continue to exist at Détroit, except that it was up to him to undertake the pursuit against those who absconded with his other possessions [*pourvoir contre ceux qui se seraient emparé de ses autres effets*], and that he would be issued a judgment of 2000 *livres* drawn on the royal Treasury [*une ordonnance de 2,000 livres sur le Trésor royal*] as a **final** settlement [*pour toute indemnité*]. Because these lands have been conceded to others and because it is nevertheless necessary to end this affair, the king has agreed with his plan that he [Joseph de Lamothe Cadillac] be sent again [*renvoyer*] to discuss it on the spot [*sur les lieux*, at *Détroit*].²⁸

Bolding added by me. **There is no documented evidence that Joseph de Lamothe Cadillac ever traveled to *Détroit*.** About the time of the above decision, new concessions began to be made.

First Concessions to the South and West (Downriver on the North Shore), 1747

Jesuit Father **Armand de La Richardie** moved his Mission to the Huron to *Isle aux Bois Blancs* (now Bob-Lo Island) in **1742**. This mission, entitled the Mission of the Assumption among the Hurons of Detroit, had first been established near and downriver from the fort of *Détroit* in **1728**. See the 1731 map above. The Mission to the Huron remained on *Isle aux Bois Blancs* for five years, from **1742** to **1747**. It moved to *Pointe de Montréal* on the south bank of the Detroit River, at and near the present Church of the Assumption, in **1748** after the rebel Huron destroyed the settlement on the island.²⁹ With the Huron having relocated, land became available to the left of the fort, south, and west, downriver.

Guillaume Teasdale reports, “a tract first granted in 1734 [on the east side, see above] ... had been returned to the King because its grantee had failed to build and maintain a dwelling on it. The **new owner** of this lot was **Jean Chapoton**, a French-born surgeon who had lived within Fort Pontchartrain for many years.”³⁰ When I examined the **18 June 1743** concession to Chapoton for myself, I read:

²⁷ See my article “Who Was the Anonymous 1702 Wet Nurse for One of Lamothe Cadillac’s Children? Additional documentation for the birth of a Cadillac child at Fort Pontchartrain in 1702” at http://habitantheritage.org/early_detroit_1701-1710_chart_program, originally published in *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 26, no. 1 (January 2005): 21-27.

²⁸ LAC, 1745, juin, 5, MIKAN no. 2514094, translation mine.

²⁹ Father Pierre Potier arrived at *Isle aux Bois Blancs* on 25 September **1744** at four a.m. See Rev. George Paré, “Pierre Potier, S. J.,” *CCHA, Report*, 18 (1950), 51 of 47-57, available on the Web.

³⁰Teasdale, 70.

Jean Chapoton *Chirurgien au Detroit du Lac Erie* saying that he has been obliged to sell a plot of land that we had granted at the said place of Detroit because he was too far away from the fort to be able to treat those who were sick whom he is obliged to treat as a surgeon, that he had decided to form a new establishment on another plot of land next to **Charles Chauvin** which belonged formerly to the man named Philis [**Jacques Desmoulins dit Philis**] who has since abandoned it, that he had built on the said land a house, barn, and stable, cleared considerable land, for which he asks us to grant him the two *arpents* in frontage [of land] previously belonging to Philis by forty *arpents* in depth, and an augmentation of two *arpents* also in front of the same depth, the said four *arpents* joining on the east north east side to **Charles Chauvin**, and on the west south west to land not yet conceded. ...³¹

On 30 May 1745, another concession on the east side on the same side of the river as the fort was granted to **Jean-Baptiste Beaulieu**, three *arpents* by forty, between Jean Chapoton and the land of the *Domaine*, land owned solely by the king.³²

There were two more concessions before the large convoys of settlers in 1749 and 1750, and both were on the north shore but on the southwest side. I quote now from a wonderful website about the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit and its first European founder: **Robert Navarre**. Robert served as

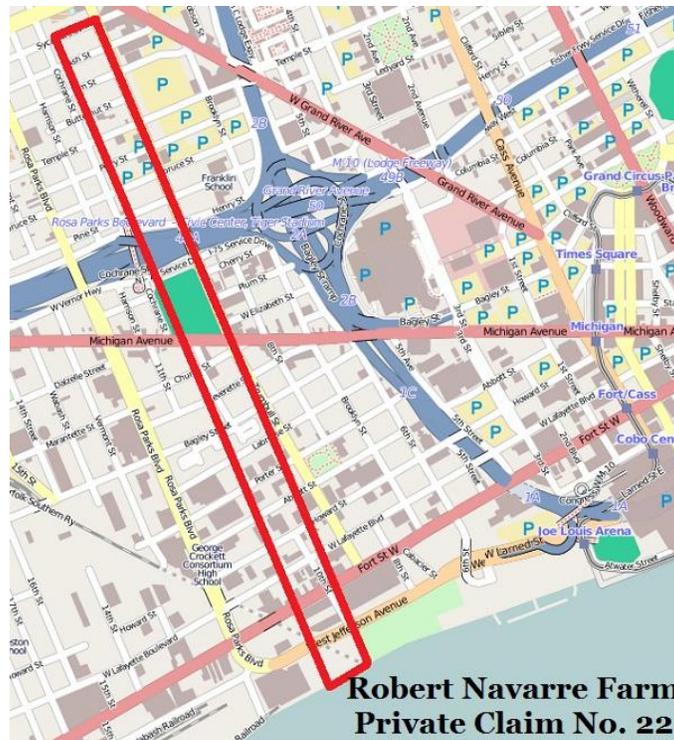
the record keeper, the lawyer, the general scrivener, the surveyor, tithing gatherer, tax collector, treasurer of the king's revenue, and perhaps the school teacher of the settlement" (Burton 703). Navarre married Marie Lootman dit Barrois at Detroit on February 10, 1734.... On May 1, 1747, the Canadian government granted Navarre a parcel of land measuring 3 by 40 *arpents* on the Detroit River (Farmer 20). This was the first land grant made west of the fort—until then, all concessions had been on the east.³³

Paul Szewczyk's site includes this map locating the Navarre concession as at modern-day 10th Street:

³¹ *Acte de concession par Charles de Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, et Gilles Hocquart, gouverneur et intendant de la Nouvelle-France, à Jean Chapoton, chirurgien au détroit du lac Érié (Détroit) d'un emplacement appartenant auparavant au nommé [belonging previously to the man named] Philis (Philia), réuni au Domaine du Roi parce que ledit Philis n'y a pas tenu feu et lieu et n'y a procédé à aucun défrichement, [reunited to the Domaine du Roi because the said Philis did not maintain residence and did not clear any land] lequel emplacement contenant deux arpents de front sur quarante de profondeur avec une augmentation de deux arpents de front, lesdits quatre arpents joignant du côté est-nord-est les terres de Charles Chauvin et du côté de l'ouest-sud-ouest les terres non concédées, d'un bout ledit lac Érié et de l'autre les terres non concédées, à titre de cens et rentes. - 18 juin 1743, BAnQ Cote : E1,S3,P359*

³² BAnq, Cote : E1,S3,P368, *Acte de concession par Charles de Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, et Gilles Hocquart, gouverneur et intendant de la Nouvelle-France, au sieur Jean-Baptiste Beaulieu, demeurant au détroit du lac Érié (Détroit), d'une étendue de terre de trois arpents de front sur quarante de profondeur....*

³³ Paul Szewczyk, <http://corktownhistory.blogspot.com/search?q=Navarre>



The grant was actually made by Charles de Boische, *Marquis de Beauharnois*, and Gilles Hocquart, *gouverneur et intendant de la Nouvelle-France*, on behalf of the king. Szewczyk has also traced the history of this property.

After Navarre passed away on November 21, 1791, the land became the property of his son, Francois. By that time, he had already settled on land in Monroe County deeded to him by the Potawatomi Indians. Francois Navarre sold the inherited land to his cousin Joseph Beaubien on September 12, 1797.

On another page, Paul Szewczyk explains the transfers of property on the west side of what is called Woodbridge Farm.³⁴

Woodbridge Farm

This area was originally two separate farms.

Private Claim No.: 22

Width: 3 arpents (575 ft)

Area: 102.53 acres

Earliest known owner: Robert Navarre (1709-1791)

- **1 May 1747**--New France confirmed land grant to Robert Navarre.
- **21 November 1791**--Robert Navarre died, leaving the farm to his son Francois.
- **12 September 1797**--Francois Navarre sold the land to his cousin Joseph Beaubien.
- **16 July 1807**--Detroit land office recorded private claim #22 by Beaubien.
- **20 April 1811**--Private claim #22 confirmed. [by the U.S.A.]
- **15 November 1810**--Sold to James May.
- **1 October 1819**--Sold to William Woodbridge. Platting began in 1858 and was continued by his heirs.

³⁴ <http://corktownhistory.blogspot.com/2013/04/corktown-pre-history-from-farmland-to.html>

See the Corktown blog for more maps and charts of the changes in possession over time in modern Corktown.

One more concession before the large arrival of new colonists in 1749 and 1750 was granted to **Eustache Gamelin**, on 1 May 1747, a plot of land also on the southwest side of the fort on the north shore.

1749 and 1750s

There is much more already available about concessions during the French Period at Detroit:

- ❖ Gail Moreau-Desharnais's translation and transcription of "Edward Cicotte Ledger, 1749-1752,³⁵ Containing Accounts of French Settlers at Detroit,³⁶" *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 29, #3 – July 2008.
- ❖ Diane Wolford Sheppard and Gail Moreau-DesHarnais on the Census of 1762, **a series of three articles** that were judged the best articles published in 2013. They may be read on the new website of the French-Canadian Heritage Society <http://habitantheritage.org/home>
- ❖ This is the direct link:
http://habitantheritage.org/french-canadian_resources/land_and_census_information

If you have not yet visited our new website, do so now. Diane Wolford Sheppard has created a wonderful resource and will continue to add articles and images.

Finally, these are the conclusions I have reached after many years of research about the plots of land in Fort Pontchartrain and the concessions of land outside of the fort:

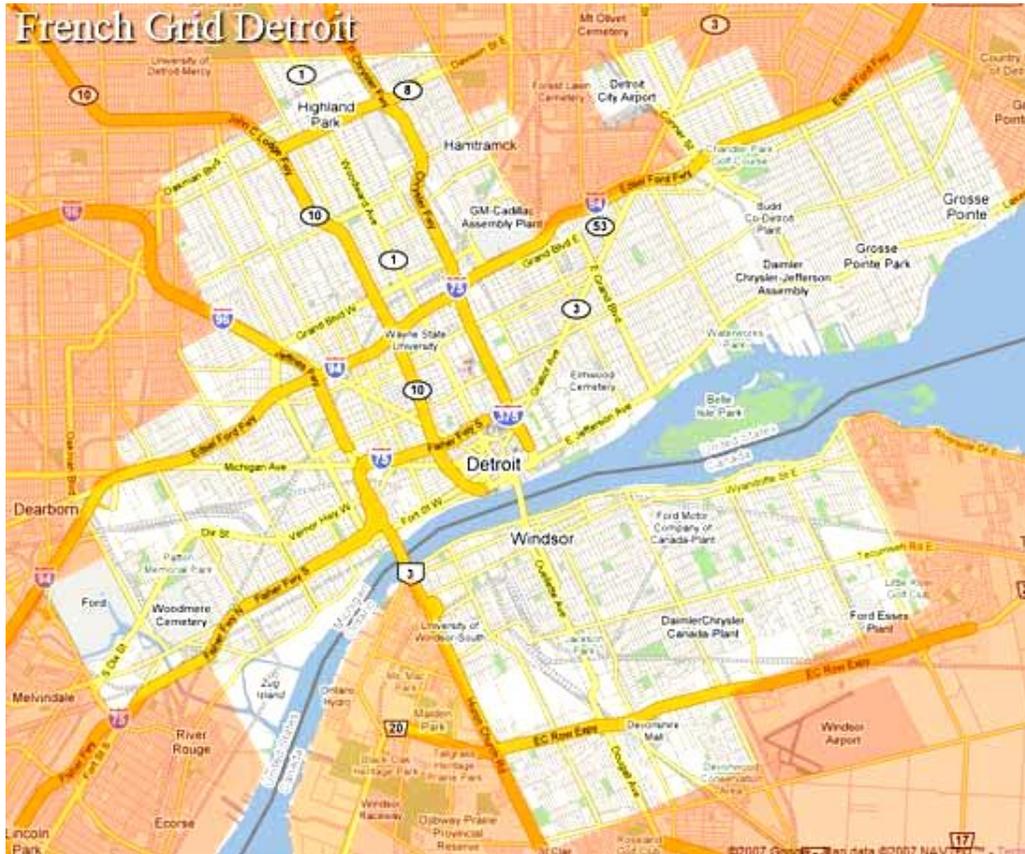
- ❖ Land concessions at Detroit are complicated, both those inside and those outside of the fort.
- ❖ Don't believe everything you have read.
- ❖ Understand that everyone sometimes makes mistakes in reading, transcription, or interpretation.
- ❖ Don't expect a person or family to remain in the same place forever, even though the concession documents say the land is theirs "forever".
- ❖ Some documents, however, are gone forever.
- ❖ Thank Cadillac for his attempt to regain possessions he claimed as his own.
- ❖ Study the geography of the Detroit area, then and now, and realize changes have occurred.
- ❖ Acquaint yourself with the provisions of the *seigneurial* system, including that women, wives and daughters, inherited property.
- ❖ Recognize that others have paved the way for you to trace your ancestors in Detroit through a variety of sources.
- ❖ Explore the ways you can make your own discoveries because of recent technological advances.

³⁵ Note from the 2008 article: Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan, BHC microfilm #1066, negative; Manuscript LMS L4 Cicotte (Edward V.) Papers; LMS Cicotte (E. V.) It is believed that the original ledger was written by Robert Navarre, first royal notary at Détroit.

³⁶ Note from the 2008 article: This ledger was given to Edward V. Cicott / Cicotte by his grandfather, Jean Baptiste Cicott, in the presence of Captain Francis Cicott. Jean Baptiste Cicotte was the son of Zacharie Cicotte and Marie Angélique Godefroy. Marie Angélique was the daughter of Jacques Godefroy de Mauboeuf (in Détroit before 1710) and Marie Chêne. In turn, Marie Chêne was the daughter of Pierre Chêne and Louise Bailly. Pierre Chêne was among the early settlers to Détroit before 1710. Thus, Edward V. Cicott descended from some of the "founding families" of the Detroit River Region. A note at the beginning of the ledger states that the notes made in the book were done by J. B. Cicot in 1790. This note was written at Petite Côte (present-day LaSalle, Ontario) Nov. 1818. Jean Baptiste Cicotte was born in 1749 at Détroit.



Carte des environs du fort Détroit [Carte du détroit et du lac Sainte-Claire] 1703³⁷



³⁷ Cote : 2008-06-019, www.septentrion.qc.ca. Modern map from Google Maps.