

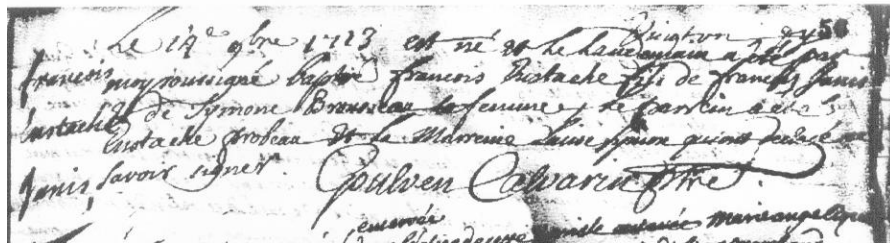
**The François Janis Family of the Detroit River Region and the Nicolas Janis Family of Kaskaskia (Illinois) and Ste. Genevieve (Missouri): Another Example of Brothers Confused One for the Other**

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Apparently the only individual to immigrate to New France with the surname **Janis** was **François Janis**, son of **Jean Janis** and **Marie Paquet**, from the parish of St-Didier, Argenteuil-sur-Armençon, district of Avalon in Champagne (today the department of Yonne). Presently, only one reference to a Janis has been found in the registers in Argenteuil. This was the marriage of François Janis and .... in 1649. For the crucial period for the birth of François, circa 1676, the records are missing.

The first mention of **François Janis** in Canada was when he married **Simone Brosseau**, daughter of **Julien Brosseau** and **Simone Chalifou**, on 14 November 1704, at Trois-Rivières. They were the parents of eleven children, five of whom were sons: **Antoine** (born 6 April 1708 at Trois-Rivières), **Jacques** (born 23 February 1711 at Trois-Rivières), **François Eustache** (born 14 November 1713 at Québec), **Pierre** (born 13 April 1715 at Québec and buried 12 July 1715 at Charlesbourg), and **Nicolas François** (born 6 January 1720 at Québec).<sup>1</sup> In the Detroit River Region the two brothers, **François Eustache** and **Nicolas François**, have been mistaken for each other for many years.

Following are the baptismal records of François Eustache Janis<sup>2</sup> and Nicolas François Janis:<sup>3</sup>



14 November 1713, birth of François Eustache Janis.

**Transcription:** [françois Eustache Janis] Le 14<sup>e</sup> 9<sup>bre</sup> 1713 est né et le lendemain a été par moy soussigné baptisé **françois Eustache** fils de **françois Janis** et de **Symone Brosseau** sa femme, le parrain a été **Eustache Proteau** et la marraine **Louise Symon** qui ont déclaré ne savoir signer.

**Translation:** On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1713 was born and the following day, was, by me, the undersigned, baptized François Eustache, son of François Janis and Symone Brosseau, his wife. The godfather was Eustache Proteau and the godmother Louise Symon who declared not knowing how to sign.

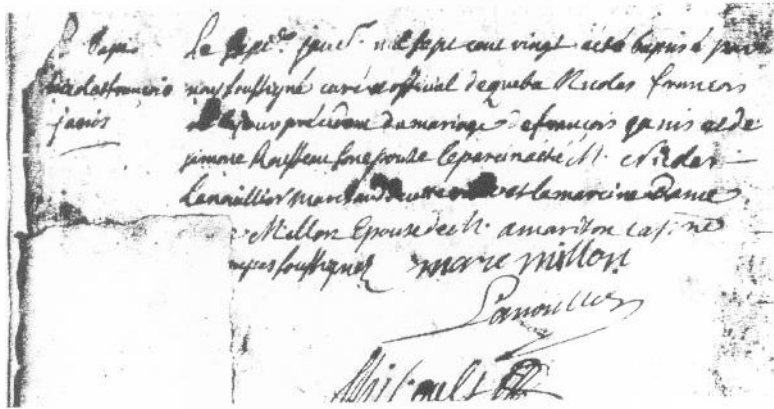
**Transcription:** [Nicolas François Janis (act follows on next page)] Le sept<sup>e</sup> janv<sup>r</sup> mil sept cent vingt a été baptisé par moy soussigné curé et official de quebec **Nicolas françois** né le jour precedent du mariage de **françois Janis** et de **simone Rousseau** son epouse le perein a été M. **Nicolas Lanouillier** marchand de cette ville et la mareine **Dame [...]** **Millon** Epouse du M. **Amariton** capt<sup>ne</sup> [part of page missing] rouples soussignez.

**Translation:** On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1720 was baptized by me, the undersigned curate and official of Québec, Nicolas François, born the preceding day from the marriage of François Janis and Simone Rousseau, his wife. The godfather was M. Nicolas Lanouillier, merchant of this city, and the godmother, Dame [...] Millon, wife of M. Amariton, captain [ in the t]roops, undersigned.

<sup>1</sup> René Jetté, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec des origines à 1730* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1983), 591; PRDH #9497.

<sup>2</sup> [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) Drouin Records, Notre-Dame de Québec, 1712-1720, image 56 of 273.

<sup>3</sup> [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) Drouin Records, Notre-Dame de Québec, 1720-1728, image 2 of 381.



7 January 1720, baptism of Nicolas François Janis

It is very possible the mistaken identity began with Tanguay.<sup>4</sup> He attributed five sons to François Janis and Simone Brosseau: **Antoine** (baptized 7 April 1708); **Jacques** (baptized 25 February 1711); **François-Eustache** (baptized 14 November 1713); **Pierre** (baptized 13 April 1715 and buried 12 July 1715); **Nicolas-François** (baptized 7 January 1720). Tanguay notes the marriage of **Antoine Janis** with **Catherine Tessier** on 11 October 1728 at Montréal. He shows no marriage for Jacques or François-Eustache. Tanguay indicates a marriage for **Nicolas-François** to **Thérèse Meloche** at Détroit, 23 August 1745. In reality, **Nicolas-François married Marie Louise Thaumur dite Lasource** 27 April 1751 at Kaskaskia.<sup>5</sup>

The book that is considered to be a somewhat reliable source for information on families in the Detroit River Region is the one published by the Detroit Society for Genealogical Research and is usually known simply as “Denissen.” Father Christian Denissen undertook the project of recording the genealogies of the families who had lived in the Region from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> In Denissen, the son of François Janis and Simone Brosseau is erroneously named: Francis Nicolas (François Nicolas), baptized 7 January 1720. According to Denissen, this “François” married Thérèse Meloche, daughter of Pierre Meloche and Jeanne Caron, 23 August 1745, at Détroit.<sup>7</sup> In the church records of the Detroit River Region at that time - Ste. Anne de Détroit and L’Assomption, Sandwich (present-day Windsor, Ontario) – François Janis is never called by any other name than **François**. In the *Livre de Compte De la Mission des hurons du Detroit* [*Account Book of the Huron Mission*] by Father Potier, François is always referred to as **Janis**. In the census compiled by Father Potier in 1752 he was referred to as **Janis**.<sup>8</sup> In the 1762 census of Détroit,<sup>9</sup> after the British conquest, he was referred to as **Janis**. Thus, the Janis in the Detroit River Region was never called Nicolas François or François Nicolas in any primary document. He was simply **François Janis** or **Janis**. A note made by an unnamed person at the end of Volume 2 of Denissen states that “Denissen used much

<sup>4</sup> L’abbé Cyprien Tanguay, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles canadiennes depuis la fondation de la colonie jusqu’à nos jours*, (Province de Québec: Eusébe Senécal, Imprimeur-Éditeur, 1871), Vol. 4, 580.

<sup>5</sup> PRDH #9497; Marthe Faribault-Beaugard, *La population des forts français d’Amérique (XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Tome II (Montréal: Éditions Bergeron, 1984), 92. In the marriage act at Kaskaskia, Nicolas Janis is said to be the son of the deceased François and Simone Brussaut. One of the witnesses to the marriage was Janis (no first name given).

<sup>6</sup> Rev. Christian Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region 1701-1936, Revision*, (Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987), Vol. I, 591.

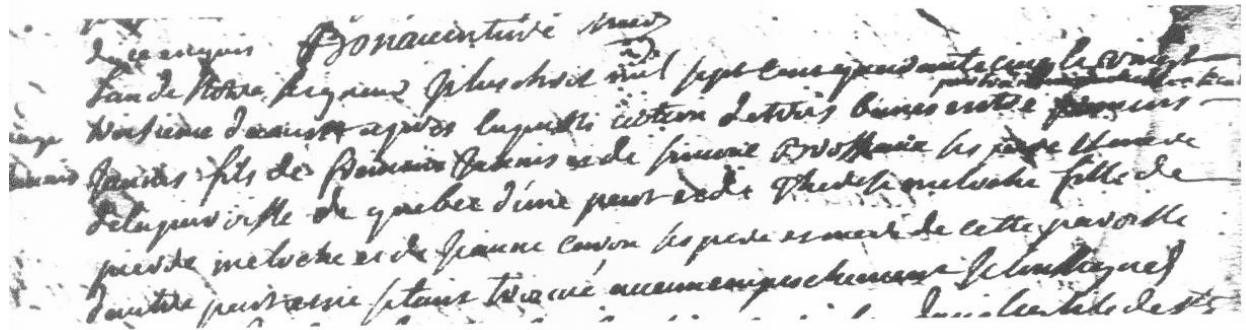
<sup>7</sup> Denissen, Vol. I, xii.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Toupin, *Les Écrits de Pierre Potier* (Les Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa: 1996), 235, 531.

<sup>9</sup> Copy held in the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

from Tanguay.”<sup>10</sup> A source listed in the bibliography for the Denissen Revision is also a staple for the Detroit River Region: the book by Father Lajeunesse.<sup>11</sup> In the index of Lajeunesse’s book, the name of **Janis, Nicolas François** is mentioned several times.<sup>12</sup> Even though the name used in a record is Janisse or Janis, Father Lajeunesse, for some unknown reason, attributes the name of Nicolas François to him. In his footnote explaining the name Janis, Father Lajeunesse wrote: “Nicolas Janis who did the stone and mason work was married to Meloche’s sister, and at this time [1743] he also resided on the north side.”<sup>13</sup> Actually, it was François (Eustache), the stone mason, who married Meloche’s sister but not until 1745. In every case that Father Lajeunesse cites the name Janis, there is no first name of Nicolas François actually written in the document. However, in two instances, the full name is given: **François Janesse**.<sup>14</sup> Father Lajeunesse wrote that the genealogies in the back of his book were “adapted from Denissen’s Genealogies in the Burton Historical Collection and from the Registers of Assumption Church.” In these family genealogies, Father Lajeunesse perpetuates the error of the use of the name Nicolas François Janis in the Detroit River Region. In one record he indicates that **Reine Langlois** married at Assumption 9 October 1786, **Hippolyte Janis**, son of *Nicolas Janis* and **Thérèse Meloche**. In a second record, Father Lajeunesse wrote that **Thérèse Meloche** married at Detroit on 7 January 1750 to Nicolas François Janis.<sup>15</sup> The only true statement is that Thérèse Meloche was married at Detroit. However, she married François Janis, and the date was 23 August 1745.

Thus at this point, the trail of the error in the name seems to have originated with Tanguay, then reinforced by Denissen, and further perpetuated by Lajeunesse.



Excerpt of marriage of **François Jannis**, son of **François Jannis** and **Simone Brosseaux** from the city of Québec, and **Thérèse Meloche**, daughter of **Pierre Meloche** and **Jeanne Caron** from the parish of Ste. Anne de Détroit, 23 August 1745.<sup>16</sup>

The name is clearly written as **François**, not Nicolas or Nicolas François. The error of the name is found in other sources: (1) the translation by Richard Elliott in 1891 of Father Potier’s account book;<sup>17</sup> (2) the

<sup>10</sup> Denissen, Vol. II, 1271. It is indicated in the bibliography the original books by Tanguay were published between 1871 and 1890.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest J. Lajeunesse, C.S.B., *The Windsor Border Region: Canada’s Southernmost Frontier* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> Lajeunesse, 369.

<sup>13</sup> Lajeunesse, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Lajeunesse, 72. (1) In the list of families on the South Shore, on 16 July 16, 1782, that was required by Major de Peyster, the full name of François Janesse was used; 78. (2) On 1 January 1753, **François Janis** was godfather to François, son of Louis Viller and Marie Jos. Morin.

<sup>15</sup> Lajeunesse, 335, 337, 338.

<sup>16</sup> [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) Ste. Anne de Détroit, 1702-1780, image 20 of 238.

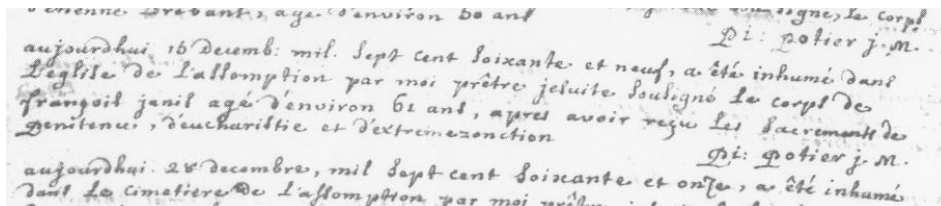
<sup>17</sup> Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library: MS/Elliott, R. R. 1 Volume The Jesuit Manuscript. The account book of the Huron Mission of Detroit, of the business transactions between the mission and the colonists of

1750 census of Detroit and the 1762 census of the Detroit River Region;<sup>18</sup> (3) by the late Peter Halford in his book, *Le français des Canadiens à la veille de la conquête*.<sup>19</sup> In the 1750 census only the name **Janisse** is given, but Donna Valley Russell assumed the full name was François Nicolas Janis. In the 1762 census again only the name **Jannisse** is given, but, again, Russell assumed this was Nicolas Janis. Two of the sources used by Russell for the names of people in the various time periods were Tanguay and Denissen.<sup>20</sup> Peter Halford, at the end of his book, in the section entitled “Les sources orales déclarés” cites the works of Denissen and Lajeunesse as being very helpful in identifying the people in the Detroit River Region. For his entry under Janis, Halford wrote: “Janis, Nicolas-François. Né en 1720 à Québec....” His two sources for information on the family were Denissen and Lajeunesse.<sup>21</sup>

**François** (Eustache) and **Nicolas** (François), sons of François Janis and Simone Brosseau, led two distinctly different lives in two distinctly different regions of New France. **François (Eustache)** Janis was hired by Paul de Lamarque on two separate occasions to go to the *villages des sakis et renards*: 13 August 1738 in a contract by the notary Lepallieur and 7 August 1739 in a contract by the notary Adhémar. In the 1738 contract it was noted that he was a *maçon* (mason), the same occupation he followed when he arrived in the Detroit River Region, married **Thérèse Meloche**, daughter of **Pierre Meloche** and **Jeanne Caron**, and settled down to raise a family of eleven children (only the years are given for the birth of each child).<sup>22</sup>

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. François Pierre – 1746 | 7. François – 1756   |
| 2. Thérèse – 1748         | 8. Pierre – 1759     |
| 3. François – 1749        | 9. Thérèse – 1761    |
| 4. Geneviève – 1751       | 10. Hippolyte – 1764 |
| 5. Nicolas – 1752         | 11. Nicolas – 1766   |
| 6. Marie Madeleine – 1753 |                      |

François Janis was buried 16 December 1769 [*sic*, the preceding and following parish register entries are dated 1771] in the church of Assumption [present-day Windsor]. The Jesuit priest, Father Pierre Potier, wrote that he was about 61 years of age.



**Nicolas (François)** Janis was hired in July 1740 by Paul Lamarque, Sieur Marin, in a contract by Blanzly, to go to the *Poste de la Baie* (present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin) and to return to Montréal in 1742. He must have returned early because in a contract by Blanzly, 4 June 1741, he was hired to go to the *poste de la Rivière St. Joseph* (present-day Niles, Michigan) and to return to Montréal in 1743. Nicolas settled in

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Detroit 1733-1751. Written by Father Peter Potier, S.J., last of the Huron Missionaries. Translated and annotated by Richard R. Elliott, 1891.

<sup>18</sup> Donna Valley Russell, *Michigan Censuses 1710-1830 Under the French, British and Americans* (Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, Inc., 1982), 12, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Peter W. Halford, *Le français des Canadiens à la veille de la conquête: témoignage du père Pierre Philippe Potier, S. J.* (Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa: 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Russell, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Halford, 310, 314.

<sup>22</sup> Denissen, Vol. I, 591.

Kaskaskia (present-day Illinois) after his marriage there in 1751 to **Marie Louise Thaumur dite LaSource**, daughter of Jean **Baptiste Thaumur** and **Marie Françoise Rivard dite Lavigne**, and was the father of the following children:<sup>23</sup>

1. Jean-Baptiste – 1759
2. Françoise – 1763
3. Antoine – 1765
4. Jean – 1767
5. Nicolas – 1772
6. Marie-Catherine – 1774
7. Félicité (married in 1775)
8. François (married in 1792)
9. Marie-Françoise-Louise (married in 1785)



Home of Nicolas Janis, inherited by his son, François, in modern-day Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.<sup>24</sup>  
Photo taken 16 October 2009 by FCHSM member, Pat Miller.

Nicolas Janis lived in Kaskaskia and eventually settled in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, where both he and his son, François, served as captains in the militia. He “was an old man when he moved to the New Town [of Ste. Genevieve] in 1788, but he had owned land on the west side of the Mississippi for decades.”<sup>25</sup> Nicolas Janis was still living 5 March 1796 when he sold his 400-a, head-of-family claim to William Morrison for \$30.00.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Faribault-Beaugard, Tome II, 79, 88, 91, 136.

<sup>24</sup> Information concerning the house is found in: Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Story of Old Ste. Genevieve: An Account of An Old French Town In Upper Louisiana: Its People and Their Homes* (Tuscon, Arizona: The Patrice Press, 1998), 136 -139. “Nicholas Janis moved from Canada to Kaskaskia, Ill., and married there in 1751. His son, François, was married at Prairie du Rocher in 1781 and moved shortly thereafter to Ste. Genevieve with his father. In 1789 Nicholas was granted land in Ste. Genevieve and erected the present-day Janis-Ziegler house c. 1790-91. With the death of Nicholas, François inherited the house and in the early 1800s converted part of it into the Green Tree Tavern. ... In 1807 the first meeting place of Freemasons in Missouri was held in the Green Tree. The lodge was called Louisiana Lodge No. 109 and remained in existence for fifteen years. The building remained in the Janis family until 1833 ...”

<sup>25</sup> Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve: An Adventure on the Mississippi Frontier* (Tuscon, Arizona: The Patrice Press: Tuscon, 1996), 429.

<sup>26</sup> Family History Library Microfilm #1543598, item 8, Kaskaskia Record Book C, entry 80.