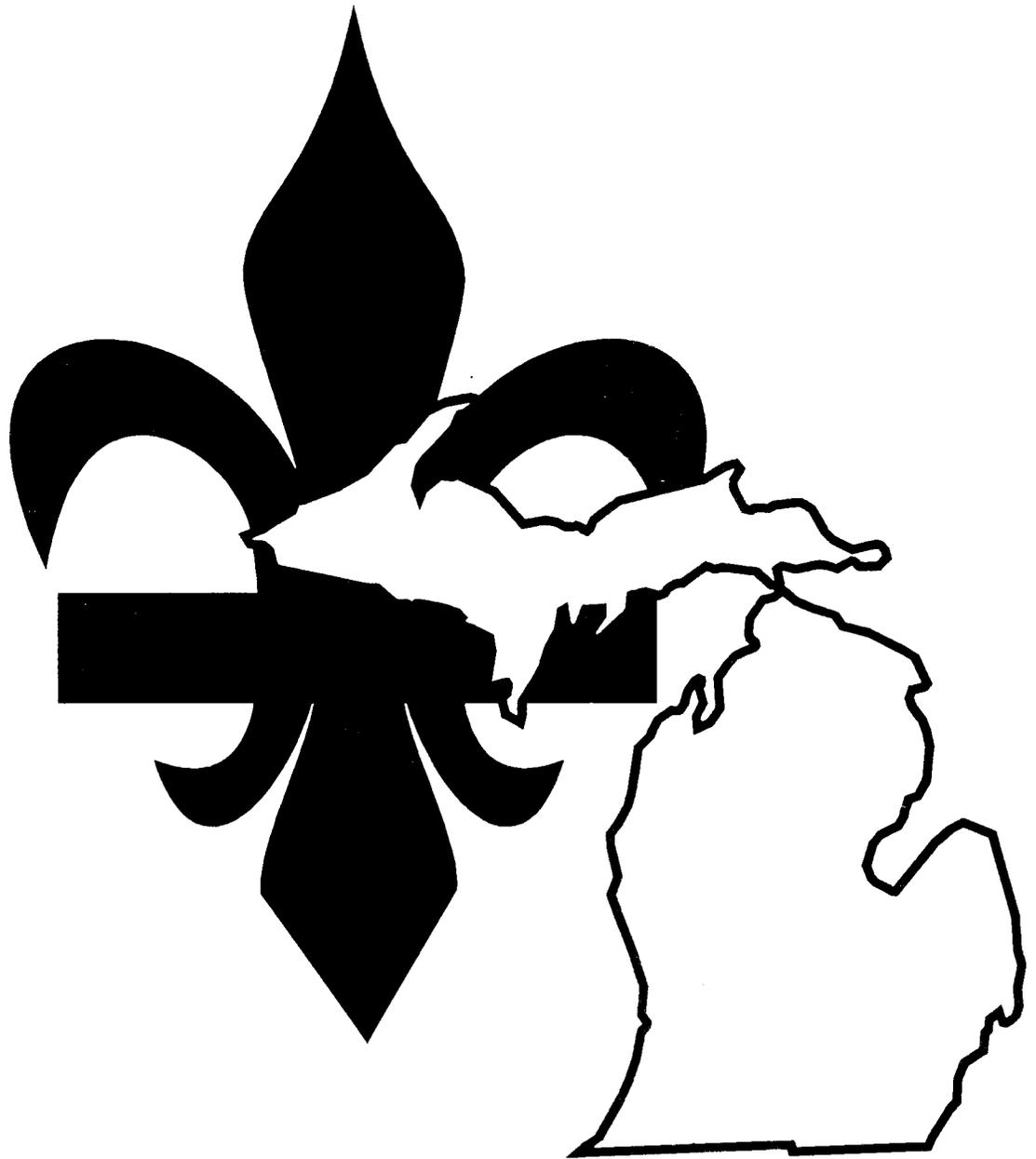


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Adapted from a map which originally appeared in *Canadian Geographic*, Aug/Sep 1990

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## GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH AMONG THE MILITARY RECORDS OF NEW FRANCE: AN UPDATE

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In 1986 I made a presentation before the Ontario Genealogical Society concerning how to locate and understand information concerning ancestors who served in the military in New France. This lecture subsequently was published.<sup>1</sup> In the following years several new and important works on this topic have been published or have come to my attention. The purpose of this update is to make note of these works and to provide a brief explanation of their value. For a more complete treatment of military units serving in New France and the basic resources for learning about military ancestors, I refer the reader to my article the Ontario Genealogical Society published. The present effort is not meant to replace the previous article.

### **Carignan-Salières Regiment**

Verney, Jack. *The Good Regiment: The Carignan-Salières Regiment in Canada, 1665-1668*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. See especially, Appendix B: Nominal Roll, pp 145-185. This is a well-documented revisionist history of the famous Carignan Regiment and their fight against the Iroquois. The author has gone back to the original sources and critically attacks some of the cherished myths surrounding the regiment. The soldiers of the regiment keep their honor intact because most of the author's criticisms are aimed at their leaders. For example, the foolishness of Governor de Courcelle, who ordered the men out on a grueling winter campaign, is made blatantly obvious. Verney also shows that Marquis de Tracy's summer campaign against the Iroquois was not the overwhelming victory that many French-Canadian historians have portrayed in the past. For genealogists, the background information Verney provides about the life of the common soldier is very interesting. He also covers the movement of

the regiment from France to Canada as well as the settlement of many of the soldiers in Canada at the end of their campaign. Appendix B is particularly valuable. He lists all the known officers and soldiers including their aliases, rank, and biographical notes concerning their fate in Canada. The information is organized by company, then the officers by rank, and finally the men listed in alphabetical order. Regrettably, there is no index for this appendix, so you must search through each unit to find your ancestors.

### **Compagnies Franches de la Marine**

Cassel, Jay. "The Troupes de la Marine in Canada, 1683-1760: Men and Material" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1987) See especially, Appendix D: Military Operations 1683-1760, pp 524-533; Appendix E: The Forts of Canada 1680-1760, pp 534-541; Appendix H: Officers of the Troupes de la Marine in Canada, 1683-1761, pp 555-602.<sup>2</sup> Genealogists often neglect to use dissertations and theses. However, they can be an extremely valuable source of information. Often, when they are published as books or articles, some of the best detailed information of interest to genealogists is removed to conserve space. If Cassel publishes his dissertation, then let us hope that he does not sacrifice any of the detail. His dissertation is crammed with all sorts of interesting facts and figures. For example, he discusses shipping patterns across the Atlantic Ocean. That is, how long it would take ships to be provisioned, when they could leave, when they had to arrive before the ice set in, how long the average trip took, etc. He also discusses shipping on the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. This information is of value to the military historian because it is necessary to understand the logistics of supplying the troops. However, it is also of interest to genealogists trying to understand the migration experience of non-military ancestors.

Cassel discusses the origins of the Marines, or Colonial Regulars, their organization and command, patterns of military life, recruitment, the non-military economic activities of the soldiers, transportation, clothing, weapons, artillery, rations and nutrition, shelter, medical care, and how they were paid.

By discussing all these details Cassel lays the groundwork for several substantive points: 1) given the distances and long winter it was a logistical nightmare to supply the Marines from France; 2) nevertheless, it was also a major accomplishment that they did a good job for a long period; 3) although military spending on fortifications, supplies, and Indian allies was important, the individual Marine did not make a significant contribution to the colonial economy -- though he did participate in it; 4) the Marines did not contribute disproportionately to population growth of the colony; 5) the military value of the Marines was limited because they were poorly trained and badly disciplined. Cassel points out, like Nicolai below, that the militia may have been more valuable than the Marines. He does concede that their officers were "competent but unremarkable." They provided the garrison to protect the colonial settlements, so that the officers, the militia, and Indian allies could raid the English and Dutch colonies.

Although the Marines did not make as large a contribution to the growth of the population as previously suspected, they are still important to genealogists. Many Franco-American genealogists will be able to trace back to several ancestors who served in the Marines as officers, non-commissioned officers, or soldiers. In Appendix H there is a list of all the identified officers who served in the Marines. This list is organized alphabetically by surname and includes the full name of the officer and the year that he was born, entered service, left service, and died. This list is excellent for identifying if your ancestor was an officer. It can also be used to locate the full name of a common soldier's officer and possibly lead to more information about an ancestor's service under that officer.<sup>3</sup>

Also of interest is Appendix D, which lists military operations from 1683-1760, and Appendix E, which lists the forts of Canada from 1683-1760. By determining the approximate date of service of an ancestor, it is possible to use Appendix D to figure out what military actions were going on at the time. The list is chronological and contains the objective, the location, whether it was a

strategic or tactical action, the outcome, and the number of Marines, Regulars, Militia, and Indians involved. Appendix E can be used to help identify the forts at which an ancestor might have been stationed and will provide an idea of the size of the garrison at the time. This list is organized alphabetically by the name of the fort and contains the years it was occupied, its exact location, and the size of the garrison over time.

This is one of the most useful works for both historians and genealogists on the French military establishment in New France.

### **Locating Military Records in Archival Sources**

Lessard, Renald. *Copies d'archives d'origine française*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, Archives nationales du Québec, 1990. Quebec has an extensive collection of materials copied from French archives. This book is a guide to these materials, most of which are on microfilm. In particular the following collections are of interest for tracing military ancestors, especially officers:

Archives Nationales, France, Fonds des Colonies, series D2C, see pp 118-120 and 186-187; series D2D, see pp 190-191; and series D2A, pp 192-194. Most of these records deal with officers in the Marines. The "Alphabet Laffilard" is especially important. It is an alphabetical list of the military service records of officers in the Marines, see pp 186-187.

Ministère des Armes, Service historique de l'Armée, Archives des corps de troupe, series X, see pp 338-343. These materials relate mostly to officers in the regular French regiments. However, a few common soldiers also are mentioned.

There are many other original manuscript sources that can be searched. For example, the papers of Montcalm, Lévis, and other officers and administrators. This well-indexed book can help locate them. The author provides the call number and the microfilm number for each collection of records.

### **Military History**

Since 1986 many new works have been produced concerning the French military. It is essential to have a thorough understanding of the French military of the period in order to comprehend the information that can be discovered about an ancestor.

Chartrand, René. *The French Army in the American War of Independence*. London: Osprey Publishing, Ltd., Men-at-Arms Series no. 244, 1991. Illustrations by Francis Back.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The French Soldier in Colonial America*. Ottawa: Museum Restoration Service, Historical Arms Series, no. 18, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Louis XIV's Army*. London: Osprey Publishing, Ltd., Men-at-Arms Series no. 203, 1988. Illustrations by Francis Back.

Chartrand is the leading expert on the French army in New France. For a discussion of the units serving in New France, their organization, uniforms, equipment, and weapons, see *The French Soldier in Colonial America*. For a view of the French army during the 17th century and the efforts to modernize it, see *Louis XIV's Army*. Lastly, for a discussion of the reforms in the French military after the disastrous Seven Years' War, see *The French Army in the American War of Independence*.

Eccles, W. J. "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal." In *Essays on New France*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp 125-133

Eccles is the leading historian of New France. It is his views that authors such as Cassel and Nicolai are calling into question with their new research. He is still essential reading. This essay is a critical and entertaining analysis of the siege of Québec and the mistakes of Montcalm and Wolfe. The other essays in this book are also of value to the military genealogist, especially, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," pp 110-124.

Hamilton, Edward P. *The French Army in America*. Museum Restoration Service, Historical Arms Series, no. 7, 1967.

Houlding, J. A. *French Arms Drill of the 18th Century*. Museum Restoration Service, Historical Arms Series, no. 19, 1988.

Houlding's work is an update and refinement of Hamilton. Both give a history of the French army in America and then go into some detail about the drilling of the soldiers. These are interesting works if one wishes to understand the monotonous discipline to which the soldiers were subject every day.

Johnson, Michael G. *American Woodland Indians*. London: Osprey Publishing, Ltd., Men-at-Arms Series no. 228, 1990. Illustrations by Richard Hook.

This handsomely illustrated booklet presents information on the Indian allies of the French. Its coverage extends beyond the French period.

Nicolai, Martin L. "A Different Kind of Courage: The French Military and the Canadian Irregular Soldier during the Seven Years' War." *Canadian Historical Review* 70:1 (March 1989):53-75.

This article re-evaluates the role of the Canadian militia during the Seven Years' War. Nicolai notes that the Canadians had served well during previous wars on hit and run raids. However, the Seven Years' War involved large formal regiments on both sides. He discusses how Montcalm failed to use effectively the Canadian militia. Montcalm placed these men, who were untrained in the strict military discipline of the time, into the regular regiments. They failed miserably, along with the regulars, on the Plains of Abraham. However, Lévis took the initiative to form the militia into regular light infantry units with officers from the regulars. These Canadian militiamen served Lévis well in the victorious Battle of Ste-Foy. Nicolai's well-documented article pays tribute to the value of the Canadian militiamen.

### **Miscellaneous**

Lastly, in my original article I neglected to mention one of the most useful sources for tracing information about soldiers of the regular French regiments. The French Historical Service of the Army has an archive with records relating to French servicemen. Of course, for the 17th and 18th centuries, most of the records deal with officers and not common soldiers. However, they might be able to locate information about your military ancestor in their records. The address is:

Ministère de la Defense  
État Major de l'Armée de Terre  
Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre  
Château de Vincennes  
94304 Vincennes Cedex,  
FRANCE

## Notes

- 1) John P. DuLong. "Genealogical Research Among the Military Records of New France," *In the Footsteps of the Habitant, 1986 Seminar Annual* (Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1986), pp 15-37.
- 2) I wish to thank Sharon Kelley for notifying me of this valuable dissertation. For details on how to acquire a copy, contact: Department of History, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1. Unlike many American dissertations, the Canadian one is not available from University Microfilms International.
- 3) For example, check to see if the officer has an entry under his name in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Be warned that this will only note the campaigns in which an officer served. It will not indicate if his company, or if a particular ancestor, accompanied him on the campaign. Nevertheless, knowing that an ancestor served with an officer who was active on several campaigns increases the probability that the ancestor might have participated in the action.

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## STE. ANNE OF DETROIT

In 1699 Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the former commandant at Michilimackinac, journeyed to France with the intention of convincing the court that the abandonment of the western country would be disastrous to New France. He proposed that a colony be established along *Le Détroit*, a name applied to the strait linking Lakes Huron and Erie. Indians were to be invited to come and live, trade their furs and receive instruction from the priests. This plan was approved by the King of France. In order to encourage a permanent agricultural settlement, Cadillac received authorization to make land grants to French settlers, to charge them rentals for these lands, and to collect seigneurial dues. On June 4-5, 1701, Cadillac and his second in command, Alphonse de Tonty, left Montréal for *Le Détroit*. They were accompanied by two priests (Fr. François Vaillant de Guelis, a Jesuit, and Fr. Constantin Delhalle, a Recollet), fifty soldiers, an equal number of voyageurs and settlers, and about 100 Indians.

On July 24, the flotilla of 25 canoes arrived at its destination. A suitable site for a fort was selected on the north shore at the narrowest point of the river. A square arpent of land was measured off for construction of houses, a warehouse, and a church which would become known as Ste. Anne's of Detroit. The enclosure, surrounded by a palisade twelve feet high, was named Fort Pontchartrain in honor of Louis Phéliepeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, who had been Minister of the Marine until 1699, and who was then Chancellor of France.

On October 5, 1703, a barn within the enclave was set on fire. Among the buildings destroyed were the church and the priest's residence, as well as those of de Tonty and Cadillac. To historians, however, the greatest loss was the original sacramental register. Although it appears that there was an attempt made to reconstruct these records, this too was lost. As a result of the disaster, the entry which is usually taken as the first in the Ste. Anne records is for the baptism of Cadillac's daughter, Marie Thérèse, on February 2, 1704.

The designation "parish of St. Anne" is noted in the registers for the first time on July 17, 1722 by Fr. Bonaventure. Prior to that date, the chaplains referred to the parish as "Fort Pontchartrain of Detroit," "Royal Fort of Detroit," or simply "fort." [references: George Paré, *The Catholic Church in Detroit* (Detroit: the Gabriel Richard Press, 1951; reissued: Wayne State University Press, 1983); Ernest J. Lajeunesse, C.S.B., *The Windsor Border Region, Canada's Southernmost Frontier* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, University of Toronto Press, 1960); Willis F. Dunbar, *Michigan, A History of the Wolverine State* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965, 1970); Henry D. Brown, *et al. Cadillac and the Founding of Detroit* (Detroit, Detroit Historical Society, Wayne State University Press, 1976).]