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SOME BIRTHS AND DEATHS RECORDED IN
A FUR TRADER'S ACCOUNT BOOK

-- *John P. DuLong*

Many genealogical facts can be found in personal papers and family Bibles. The most interesting case of hidden information that I have come across can be seen in the account book of a French-Canadian fur trader. While working on the biography of Jean-Baptiste Cadotte I found that his son Michel kept a list of births and some deaths in the family's account book. Michel married Equaysayway, an Ojibway and the daughter of Chief White Crane. In the account book Michel kept record of the vital events in his own family.

The "Cadotte Account Book, 1773-1798" is a manuscript now located in the University of Notre Dame Archives, South Bend, Indiana. The document lists the business transactions carried on by Jean-Baptiste and his sons. An English translation of this French manuscript was done by Evan A. Hart and Elizabeth Hart Bennett and is owned by Anthony Wise of "Historyland," Hayword, Wisconsin. Photocopies of the original and the translation can be found in the archives of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission office in Lansing, Michigan.

The account book was started by Jean-Baptiste Cadotte and passed into the hands of his son Michel, who took over the trading post and the business at La Pointe, Wisconsin. In turn it became the property of George Warren, Michel's grandson, around 1848. Warren presented the account book to Rev. Dr. Goldsmith, of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Eventually the tattered but intact document was sent to Notre Dame archives.

The transcription that follows is based on a xerox copy of a photograph of the vital data page. This photograph is in the possession of the Baylis Public Library, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan (Scrapbooks and Scrapbook Material, one box, folder no. 4, Cadotte Family, Genealogy Papers). Unfortunately the xerox copy is not as clear as either the original or the photograph of it. The page of interest comes at the beginning of the account book, which is unnumbered.

Most of it is in French, except for the very last comment about Michel's tombstone. His grave and marker can still be found on Madeline Island, Wisconsin. Michel did not record the date or place of his marriage, nor have I been able to uncover it. Although he carefully notes the dates of births, he does not mention the place. But it is reasonably safe to assume that most of the births took place at La Pointe or Sault Ste. Marie. Note that most of the handwriting in French seems to be done by the same person and is reasonably crisp. Perhaps Jean-Baptiste Cadotte's efforts to have his sons trained in the Seminary at Montreal paid off in clearer records.

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I have tried to preserve the spelling and punctuation idiosyncrasy in the translation of this page of vital data. My comments have been placed in square brackets. Finally, please bear with me on this translation--this is my first real attempt to deal publicly with my lack of skill in the tongue of my ancestors.

The text of the vital data page follows:

The 6 of September in 1787
was born Michel Cadotte

The 15 of December in 1788
was born Margueritte Cadotte

The 17 of December in 1790
was born Jn-Bte Cadotte

The 2 February 1794
was born Augustin Cadotte

[This note is off to the side:] Was killed
by a musket shot on Friday the 19th of
August in the morning the year 1803.

The 12 of May 1796
was born Etienne Cadotte

The 19 of July 1798
was born Julie Cadotte

The 14 Sept. 1800
was born Marie Cadotte

[Another side note:] Died the 22 July 1843
at the River Seaulte [?]

The 18 of April 1803
was born Antoine Cadotte

Sunday the 28 July 1805
between the ten and eleven hour in the evening
was born Charlotte Cadotte

15 September was born Joseph Cadotte--1807

[Handwriting now changes and the text is in English.]

At the old Catholic burying ground
at LaPointe, Wis and marked by a
neat White stone. May be found
the grave of
"M. Cadotte"
who departed this life July 8th
1837--aged-72-

[Final side note is in French
and is written lengthwise on
the page in the lower right
corner:]
Jullie Cadotte 1826
10 February died 1815(?)