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THE DE MARLE LIVRE DE RAISON:
GATEWAY DOCUMENT TO A ROYAL LINEAGE
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PART II: THE LOUVIERS MANUSCRIPT

The Provenance of the Louviers Manuscript

Gaston Saffroy cites the Louviers manuscript in his authoritative bibliography.2 It carries the title "C'est la généalogie des nobles homes Vaast de Marle escuier seigneur de Vaugien et Nicolas de Marle escuier Seigneur de La Fallaise, Frères..." which are the first few lines of the manuscript. According to the Bibliothèque de Louviers, this manuscript is on parchment, consists of 15 folios, and measures 137 by 78 millimeters. The Bibliothèque de Louviers believes that it was written during the sixteenth century.3 From the work we know that it is based in part on earlier charters from about 1448.

The provenance of the document is vague. All we know for sure is that it was donated by a certain M. Lalun. We know that members of the de Marle family used it as a livre de raison from before 9 June 1541 to 22 January 1563 to record their family information.4 It was last used in 1563 and was in the Bibliothèque de Louviers by 1903. What happened to it in the intervening years is a mystery.

The town of Louviers, Normandie (Eure), is only about 60 kilometers northwest of La Falaise, Île-de-France (Yvelines). La Falaise is where Nicolas de Marle held his seigneurie and where his branch of the family settled.5 Although the document ultimately rested in the Bibliothèque de Louviers in the province of Normandie, it mostly concerns families living during the late Middle Ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, living in the provinces of Picardie, Artois, and Flandres (the modern departments of Somme, Pas-de-Calais, and Nord). In particular, most of the places mentioned in the document are in a region called Boulonnais on the coast of the English Channel between Calais and Montreuil. See Figure 1 for a map of the region.6

Based on handwriting changes in the manuscript, there appears to have been at least three authors, all anonymous. Folios a recto to m verso are in the same distinctive late medieval hand. This was the work of the scribe that Waast and Nicolas de Marle sponsored to record their family history. This first author based his work in part on family charters dating from before 1448. This charter was prepared for Jehan de Marle, the son of Loys de Marle, and the grandson of Guille de Marle.7 However, the first author does not clearly state what these charters involved, how many there were, and their various dates. This first author provides information about the family between roughly the 1350's and 1500's. From folio n recto to o recto the handwriting changes to a less studied style and is more difficult to read. This is the work of a second author and because the pages are unclear it is the most difficult to read. This is the information that the son of Nicolas de Marle recorded about his family. The last author starts at p recto and ends at r recto, the last page. This is much clearer writing and he is the only one to record dates. It is very possible that this last author was a member of the de Marle family.

Editorial and Translation Conventions

There are several editorial conventions we have followed that must be explained for the benefit of the reader. The original manuscript is not numbered. Rather several of the pages bear letters as page numbers. However, the authors let this numbering scheme get out of sequence. Therefore, we have labelled each folio page with letters, starting with a, as was intended in the original. Unlike the original we carry them throughout the document in the appropriate sequence. Also, the folio pages are marked either recto or verso. Recto is the first page you read on the right-hand side, and verso is the second page you read on the left-hand side.

Any text between square brackets is our own and not in the original manuscript. Within the square brackets we place the folio letters, numbers for written out years, guesses of personal and place names, and translations of French words for various social roles. We have used endnotes for more detailed information pertaining to the people and places mentioned in this manuscript.
Figure 1
Map of Flandres Artois, and Picardie
A question mark in square brackets means that we have some doubt about our transcription of a word. A blank line means that a word or a fragment of a word is unreadable.

Since spelling, sentence punctuation, and capitalization were not yet fully developed or standardized in the sixteenth century, we have imposed some modern usages where appropriate to aid the reader. We have indicated next to the folio letter, again in square brackets, the readability of the text on that page. Finally, for the convenience of the reader, we have also included a genealogical diagram showing the main de Marle lines covered in this document, see Figure 2.

Finally, a warning to the reader. This is not an easy or pleasurable document to read. It requires that you pay attention to the detail and make comparison between facts separated by several pages. We suggest that you read it through once to get the feel of it, then go back over it more thoroughly on a second pass, and only on the third pass delve into the numerous endnotes. It has been our experience that every time we read through the Louviers manuscript we find facts that had escaped us before. Although we have been very careful, we still expect that you will notice mistakes or misinterpretations in our work and we welcome your comments. Our goal in doing this translation is to open the document up to the scrutiny of our fellow genealogical researchers.

NOTES

1. Gail F. Moreau is a French teacher and head of the Foreign Language Department at Pontiac Northern High School, Pontiac, Michigan. She has a Master of Arts in French. John P. DuLong is the manager of the Computer Section of the Division of Biostatistics and Research Epidemiology, Henry Ford Health Sciences Center, Detroit, Michigan. Both are active with the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan. René Jette is one of Québec's leading genealogists. He is the author of Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec and Traité de généalogie. He holds faculty positions teaching history and genealogy with the Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe and the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi. He is also the counselor to the Institut généalogique J. L. & associés, Inc. He has kindly read over this paper and offered critical advice. Any errors that remain are the fault of the translator and editor and not M. Jette.


3. Bibliothèque de Louviers to John P. DuLong, 12 September 1990 and 21 June 1991. We wish to thank M. O. Georget, the librarian at Louviers, for sending us not one but two copies of this manuscript. When we wrote back explaining that the last few pages were difficult to read, he graciously sent us a much better photocopy that allowed us to do a more accurate translation.

4. Jetté read the last few pages of the Louviers manuscript as indicating that Nicolle de Marle, the first cousin of Nicolas de Marle, had inherited this manuscript. However, the pages we received made it clear that it is Nicolas and not Nicolle. René Jetté, Traité de généalogie (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1991), pp. 596-597. Jetté, in his comments on the last draft of this paper, has acknowledged that he made an error in his Traité. He also has observed that not only are the names different, but Nicolle de Marle was an adult already by 1509-1522, while Nicolas de Marle was only married in 1541. The translator and editor of this paper, in contrast to Jetté, believe that the children of Nicolas de Marle, Seigneur de La Falaise, inherited this manuscript and used it to record family information. However, Jetté cautions us that the Nicolas de Marle mentioned in these last few pages as marrying in 1541 might be the son of Guille de Marle, Seigneur de Merguenets, and not the son of Nicolas de Marle. Seigneur de La Falaise. Unfortunately, the Louviers manuscript does not provide sufficient information to clearly identify the parentage of Nicolas de Marle whose eldest son, also named Nicolas, married Marguerite de Bionnais and whose descendants used the Louviers manuscript as a livre de raison.

5. The nearness of La Falaise to Louviers strengthens the hypothesis that it was the La Falaise branch of the de Marle family that used the Louviers manuscript to record their family information.

6. This map is based on “Fig. 3--Flandre et Artois a la fin de l'Ancien Régime,” from Jean Lestocquoy, “Histoire de la Flandre et de l’Artois,” Que sais-je? (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966) no. 375, p. 78.

7. Louviers Mss., no. 42, f. c verso.

8. Please send your observations and suggestions to John P. DuLong, Ph.D., 959 Oxford Road, Berkley, MI 48072. He can also be reached through CompuServe electronic mail: 71501,256.
Figure 2
The de Marle Family Tree
Based on the Louviers Manuscript

Robine de Fontaines

Alix de Mailly

Loys de Marle, Sr. de Marle, m. Jehanne de Delettes

Jehan de Marle, Sr. de Marle, Gouy, & Gelucque, m. the sister of Loys de Hardeuthun

Honore de Marle, Sr. de Marle, Bremeriere, la Folye, Estrees, Gelucque, & Gouy, m. Yde de Bernicelles

Ferry de Marle, Sr. de Marle, m. Jehanne de Guistelle

Anthoine de Marle, Sr. d'Estrees

(1) Guille de Marle, Sr. de Marle, m. Gilles de Thiembronne

(2) Anonymous Wife

Jehan de Marle, m. Guille de Marle, Sr. de Marle, Merquenets, & part of Thiembronne, m. Jacqueline de Mamay

Jehan de Marle, Sr. de Villers St-Pol

Waast de Marle, Sr. de Vaugien

Nicole de Marle, Lawyer, Sr. de Westrethun, part of Neufchastel, Nyelles, & Dannes

Ancestors of Catherine de Baillon

Ancestral Children

Nicolas de Marle, Sr. de La Falleise

Nicolas de Marle, m. Marguerite de Beaumais

Philippes de Marle, m. Madalaine de Chupperel

Royal Connection

Arnoul de Marle, Sr. de Neuville, m. Joziane de Vicron, widow of Nicolas de Delettes

Other Children

m. = Married to
Sr. = Seigneur
? = Linkage Unknown