Some Births and Deaths Recorded in a Fur Trader’s Account Book: The Family of Michel Cadotte le grand
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Many genealogical facts can be found in hidden away 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, Michel Cadotte le grand, the son of Jean Baptiste Cadotte, père. Michel kept a list of births and some deaths in the family's account book. He was married to 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 Cadotte, père, and his sons. An English translation of this French manuscript was done by Evan A. Hart and Elizabeth Hart Bennett and can also be found at Notre Dame. 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, père, and passed into the hands of his son Michel, who took over the trading post and the business at La Points, 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 account book was sent to Notre Dame.

The transcription that follows is based on a photocopy 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 photocopy 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 or near 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 old man Cadotte's efforts to have his sons trained in the Seminary at Montreal paid off in clearer records.

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.

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

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

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

[The 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-

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

[Another side note referring to Marie:] Died the
22 July 1843 at River Seaulte [Chippewa River,
Wisconsin]

[The final side note is in French and is written
lengthwise on the page in the lower right corner,
the text is very faded here:]
Julie Cadotte 1826
10 February died 1855[?]
1826 [Not sure why 1826 is written twice here, it
is not her birth year or the year she was married.]