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IDENTIFYING JEAN BAPTISTE DERBANNE OF LOUISIANA'S NATCHITOCHEs MILITIA, 1780-82

Participant in the Gálvez Campaigns of the
American Revolutionary War Era

By Elizabeth Shown Mills, C.G., F.A.S.G.

Among the country militia called up during 1779-80 by Louisiana's Governor Bernardo de Gálvez, in his successful efforts to drive the British out of their Gulf Coast and Lower Mississippi River strongholds, were two companies of citizen-soldiers from the colony's westernmost outpost, Natchitoches. Two Revolutionary-era rolls have survived for those companies, one dated 1 September 1780 and the other 1 January 1782 (Legajos 193-A, 195, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias [hereafter PPC-AGI]; published in Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials: Censuses, Military Rolls and Tax Lists, 1722-1803* [Chicago, 1981], 37-39, 42-44). On the first of these, there appear two separate listings under the name *Jean Baptiste Derbane*—one as a cavalryman, one a *cannonier*—both in the company of Captain Louis Charles de Blanc. The second roll carries the name of only one such man, Jean B^{te} Derbanne, with no status given. While some individuals of both rolls are listed with distinguishing nicknames or paternal names, no such identifying information appears for any Jean Baptiste Derbanne listing.

The Derbanne family is one of the oldest and most prolific in the colony and state of Louisiana, and the name *Jean Baptiste* is the most common male name among the colonial French. Identifying the man or men of the 1780 and 1782 militia has required a reconstitution of the entire Derbanne family. The distinctions that are made in this paper are based upon a twenty-year study of every extant record, civil and ecclesiastical, for every post in the Louisiana colony¹—as well as thousands of relevant records now housed in the archives of France, Spain, Canada, and Mexico.

ORIGINS AND OVERVIEW OF FAMILY

The family's Louisiana progenitor—the grandfather of the several Revolutionary-era militiamen who bore his surname—was the Canadian-born

¹ In most cases, a study has been made of the original manuscript records. In the case of the surviving ecclesiastical records of the capital city of New Orleans, the manuscript registers are not open to public scrutiny; but abstracts have been published.

François Guyon *dit* Dion Després Derbanne.² As son of a prominent sea merchant of New France and cousin-in-law of Detroit's founder, Antoine LaMothe de Cadillac (his father's junior partner), Derbanne arrived in the Louisiana colony with its founder, Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville, and appears on the first roll of the colony, taken 25 August 1699 ("Role de la garrison laissée au fort Maurepas," C13A, 1:209-19, Archives Nationales, Paris). His subsequent thirty-year career there earned him a niche in history for his explorations of the Mississippi River (higher than any European had gone before him), for his trade expeditions to Mexico City (which landed him and his equally unwelcome French colleagues in a Spanish jail), for his sundry memoirs on colonial life and travel, and for the ardor with which he championed agriculture amid men bent on finding wealth in furs and ores.

Derbanne also carved a niche of genealogical importance in the colony's religious and social history: He fathered one of the colony's first legitimized families of French-Indian children, much to the ire of church officials, who refused for more than fifteen years to marry him to his Chitimachas wife. (For more on Derbanne's career and ancestry, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "François [Guyon] Dion Despres Derbanne," in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, 2 vols. [New Orleans, 1988], 1:237-38; and Mills, "François [Guyon] Dion Despres Derbanne," *Natchitoches Genealogist* 6[1981]:1-8.)

When, in 1716, the Crown authorized the construction of an outpost to the northwest of the colonial capital of Mobile, as a buffer to stave off Spanish aggression into French Louisiana, Derbanne was named its first civil official. Arriving there in January 1717 as *subdélégué* (chief clerk) and *garde magasin* (keeper of the king's storehouse), he would hold those posts until his death in 1734 (Succession de François Dion Derbanne, Box 1, Folder 2, Natchitoches Parish Records, Louisiana State Univ. Archives [LSU Arch.], Baton Rouge). In those final years, the governmental records would immortalize him as "a man reliable, faithful and necessary for the trade in the things that we need among the Indians," and his superiors would report that "Everybody speaks well of that man" (Dunbar Rowland and Albert Sanders, *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, 3 vols. [Jackson, 1927-32], 2:144, 383).

From Natchitoches, Derbanne's Creole offspring scattered—a fact that facilitates identifying the Jean Baptiste of the 1780-82 militia rolls. To summarize:

The eldest son, *Jean Baptiste Dion*, eloped with the daughter of the lieutenant of the rival Spanish border-post of Los Adaës, creating an incident with international repercus-

² A French *dit* was a nickname used in place of the surname rather than in place of the Christian (or given) name.

sions. Eventually accepted by his in-laws, he settled among them in Spanish Texas, where the family's name was Hispanicized to Berbane.

The second son, *Jean Dion*, is believed to have settled among his mother's people in the Grande Terre region west of New Orleans. The name Dion remains prominent within Louisiana's still-extant Chitimachas tribe.

The daughter, *Louise Marguerite*,³ and son, *Gaspard Dion*, remained at Natchitoches, where both left a multitude of records, and the latter left offspring named Jean Baptiste in each of several subsequent generations.

The daughter, *Jeanne Dion*, and the son, *Pierre Dion*, in their youth settled in the down-river post of Pointe Coupée. Jeanne remained in south Louisiana—first in the Pointe Coupée jurisdiction, then in adjacent Opelousas after that area opened in the 1760s. Pierre returned to Natchitoches, but his ties to Pointe Coupée and Opelousas remained strong.

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY

1 FRANÇOIS³ GUYON *DIT* DION DESPRÉS DERBANNE (*François² Guyon Després, Jean¹ Guyon, Jacques^A Guyon*) was baptized in Québec on 6 February 1671, as son of François² Guyon Després and Marie–Marguerite Marsolet and grandson of Nicolas Marsolet, Seigneur de St. Aignan, who had arrived in New France as a ten-year-old lad with the 1613 expedition of Samuel Champlain (Cyprien Tanguay, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles Canadiennes*, 7 vols. [Québec, 1871–89], 1:294–95, 413; René Jetté, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec* [Montréal, 1983], 548–49, 775–76).

In 1709, Derbanne formed a union at Mobile, in the Louisiana colony, with the young JEANNE DE LA GRANDE TERRE, a Christianized Indian of the Chitimachas tribe who had been taken in slavery in a French retaliatory attack on her village in 1707 (for an English-language account, see Jay Higginbotham, *Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702–1711* [Mobile, 1977], 292). Their contract of marriage was dated at Natchitoches on 14 January 1726 (Inventory of Titles and Papers, Succession of François Derbanne). Since that French outpost was without a priest at the time, the church blessing of their lifelong union should have been performed by a visiting *padre* from the nearby Spanish post of Los Adaës; but the records of that mission have apparently been destroyed.

According to the extant papers treating his succession, Derbanne died while on business at New Orleans in February 1734, leaving silver dishes and goblets in a crude *bousillage* cabin that, at eighteen by twenty-eight feet, was one of the largest in the frontier settlement. His widow Jeanne succumbed on 25 October 1735 and was buried from the parish church, where she had occasionally served as godmother to one or another of her husband's slaves

³ No instance has been found of her using the *Dion* surname.

(Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803: Translated Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers* [New Orleans, 1977], hereafter *Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 128).

Children of François³ Guyon *dît* Dion Després Derbanne and his wife, Jeanne de la Grande Terre:

- i JEAN BAPTISTE⁴ DESPRÉS bp. Mobile 26 July 1710 ae 6 months (Bapt. Book 1:13, Chancery Office, Archdiocese of Mobile, Mobile, Ala.); m. secretly at Natchitoches at midnight on 8 April 1736 (after eloping during Los Adaës church services and leading the bride's family on a 15-mile chase from one border post to the other) VICTORIA MARGARITA GONZALES, b. ca. 1721 of the marriage of Lt. José Maria Gonzales and Gertrudis de la Cerda (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 13). In 1745, over a flowing signature, he sold his inherited lands to the village priest (Derbanne to Père Barnabé, Folder 1, *Natch. Ph. Rec. Coll.*, LSU Arch.) and permanently relocated amid his wife's family at San Miguel de los Adaës—the capital of Spanish Texas, situated near present Robeline, La. He appears there regularly on the extant militia rolls of 1748–54 (Bexar Archives Translations, vols. 9, 26, Univ. of Texas, Austin) but died before the 13 Feb. 1757 marriage of his daughter Marie de l'Incarnation (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 747). All children of this union, except this Marie, remained in Spanish Texas.
- ii JEAN DION b. 1716, according to his father's succession papers, and probably at Ile Dauphine off the Mobile coast where his father was, in that year, *garde magazin*. Jean disappeared from Natchitoches after the death of his mother in 1735 and has been found on record only once thereafter—at the 1755 baptism of his nephew and namesake, Jean Baptiste *filz* Pierre, at Pointe Coupée (Reg. 1:148, Ph. of St. François de la Pointe Coupée, Dept. of Hist. & Arch., Diocese of Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, La.). The prominent Chitimachas family of Dion in modern Louisiana is believed to be descended from Jean Dion. A continuous line of descent remains to be proven but is not unlikely as no other Dion family has been placed in early Louisiana.
- iii JEANNE DION b. Natchitoches 1719, according to her father's succession papers; m. Natchitoches 9 Jan. 1736 the soldier FRANÇOIS MANNE of Pointe Coupée (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 148). Settling amid her husband's family, she seems to have taken with her to rear her orphaned six-year-old brother Pierre—along with the nine slaves and substantial cash that constituted her inheritance. As Manne's wife, she led a prosperous but not particularly harmonious existence, first at Pointe Coupée and then in the new, adjoining post of Opelousas. (1773 Succ. of Jorge Baron, No. 48, and 1779 Petition of Jeanne Darbanne, No. 3597, Spanish Judicial Archives, La. State Museum, New Orleans.) As Manne's widow, she died at Opelousas in February 1788, leaving numerous offspring (Succ. of Jeanne Dion Darbonne, 27 Feb. 1788, Opel. Col. Recs., La. State Archives, Baton Rouge).
- 2 iv GASPARD DION b. Natchitoches 1724, according to his father's succession papers; m. MARIE FRANÇOISE VERGER. Since Gaspard fathered one of the two Jean Baptistes featured in this paper, his line will be continued.
- v LOUISE MARGUERITE b. Natchitoches 1727, according to her father's succession papers; m. (1) Natchitoches 19 Sept. 1740 ETIENNE BARBIER (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 207) by whom she left offspring, (2) 20 April 1778 LOUIS JU-

CHEREAU DE ST. DENIS Jr., son of the founder and long-time commandant of the Natchitoches post who bore that same name (Succ. of St. Denis, *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, hereafter *La. Hist. Quart.*, 13[1930]:180).

- 3 vi PIERRE DION DERBANNE b. Natchitoches 1730–31, according to his father's succession papers and his own burial record; m. MARIE LOUISE LECLERC. Since Pierre fathered one of the two Jean Baptistes featured in this paper, his line will be continued.

2 GASPARD⁴ DION DERBANNE (*François*³ Guyon dit *Dion Després Derbanne*, *François*² Guyon Després, *Jean*¹ Guyon, *Jacque*^A Guyon) was born at Natchitoches in 1724, according to his father's succession papers. On 27 September 1746 he drafted his contract of marriage with MARIE FRANÇOISE VERGER (Natch. Bk. 1:1, Red River Ph. Courthouse), with whom he exchanged vows before the door of the parish church two days later (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 219). Like Gaspard, his bride was of mixed French–Indian parentage, being the minor daughter of the Parisian-born Indian trader Joseph Verger and his half-Natchitoches wife, Angèlique Dumont (*Natch. 1729–1803*, 350; for Verger's Indian activities, which included exclusive trade among the Tuacanas, Reychies, Yattasses, and several other tribes south and west of the river Sabine, see *Annals of Cong.*, 9th Cong., 1st Sess., 1805–06 [Washington, D.C., 1852], 1211–16).

At the time of the marriage, Gaspard was the owner of three Negro slaves and four arpents of prime land valued at £1500 in silver money. For the bride's dower, her parents "obliged themselves to give them lodging" for one year and "to assist them as much as possible." (Marr. Contract, cited above.) Little privacy there would have been, since the bride's not-particularly prosperous parents already had seven children sharing their frontier cabin. Over the years, Gaspard's holdings grew—but not spectacularly. The two censuses of 1766 show the widowed Gaspard to be the owner of twenty arpents of land (frontage measure) on which he had produced two thousand pounds of tobacco the prior year; thirteen horses, as well as cattle, hogs, and sheep; and two adult male Negro slaves (other slave children were born and died within his home, according to parish registers) (Cens. of Jan. 1766, Misc. Coll. 3, Northwestern State Univ. Archives [NSU Arch.], Natchitoches; Cens. of 6 May 1766, Leg. 2585, Archivo de Santo Domingo, AGI). Two sisters-in-law shared his home in 1766 and cared for his children. A sometime church warden (see, for example, Doc. 593, French Arch., Natch.), Gaspard died at Natchitoches on 24 June 1785, leaving a moderate estate (Doc. 1826, French Arch., Natch.).

Children of Gaspard⁴ Dion Derbanne and his wife, Marie Françoise Verger:

- i GASPARD⁵ b. Natchitoches ca. July 1750 (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 321), d. Natchi-

toches 9 July 1806 (Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches 1800–1826: Translated Abstracts. . . Parish of St. François des Natchitoches* [New Orleans, 1980], hereafter *Natch. 1800–26*, no. 854); m. Natchitoches 26 July 1784 MARIE JOSEPHE PEROT (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 1081). As “Gaspard Derbane, the son” and “Gasparit Derbanne,” he appears on the 1780 and 1782 militia rolls of Natchitoches.

- 4 ii JEAN BAPTISTE GASPARD b. Natchitoches ca. Nov. 1752 (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 548), d. before April 1819 (Reg. 11:11, St. François des Natch. [orig. reg. at Immaculate Conception Ch. (formerly St. François), Natchitoches]).
- iii ANDRÉ ANTOINE FRANÇOIS b. Natchitoches ca. Nov. 1755 (*Natch. 1729–1803*, no. 604); a child of his age and sex appears on the 1766 censuses but has not been found thereafter.
- iv FRANÇOIS b. Natchitoches ca. Feb. 1758, bur. there 5 Nov. 1759 (*Natch. 1729–1803*, nos. 495, 672).

3 PIERRE⁴ DION DERBANNE (*François*³ Guyon dit *Dion Després Derbanne*, *François*² Guyon Després, *Jean*¹ Guyon, *Jacques*^A Guyon) was born circa 1730 or 1731, according to the papers of his father’s succession and his own burial record. Orphaned at the age of five, he appears to have gone the following year to Pointe Coupée with his newly married sister Jeanne. There, on 10 April 1748, he drafted a contract of marriage with MARIE LOUISE LECLERC (“Records of the Superior Council,” *La. Hist. Quart.* 19[1936]: 753), who had been born at Pointe Coupée on 1 August 1735 to the marriage of Louis LeClerc dit Belhumeur and his wife, Marianne Albert (Reg. 1:2, St. François de la Pointe Coupée). For reasons unexplained by extant records (possibly it was the bride’s tender age, although twelve was the legal age of marriage for females in colonial Louisiana), the actual exchange of vows did not occur until 25 January 1752 (Reg. 1:104, St. François de la Pointe Coupée).

Returning to the jurisdiction of Natchitoches by 1760, Pierre first settled on inherited land adjacent to his brother Gaspard. Despite having a larger family, Pierre’s prosperity soon outstripped that of Gaspard; the January 1766 census tallied nineteen slaves on the twenty arpents that were registered in the May enumeration. The charitable Pierre also permitted a homeless sculptor and parakeet trainer named Michel Degout to sleep on his porch, until the man’s fondness for liquor embroiled the household in a murder case. Outside the Derbanne window and in the presence of Marie Louise and the slave woman with whom she was folding clothes, Degout threw his knife at the post merchant, Pierre Crête, and hit his mark. Mme. Derbanne was forced to travel to New Orleans, via the Red and Mississippi rivers, to testify in the case; based upon her eyewitness account, the sculptor was sentenced to be broken on the wheel. (“Cabildo Archives Case No. 4,” *La. Hist. Quart.* 3[1920]:294–321.)

Shortly thereafter, Pierre obtained a grant of land some twenty-five miles

downriver from the Natchitoches post at an area called Rivière aux Cannes. There he developed one of the most prosperous plantations within the parish, but stayed active in parish affairs—too active in the view of one commandant who branded him “insubordinate” (De Vaugine to Brouillon, 17 Feb. 1784, in *Rouquier v. Derbanne*, Leg. 198, PPC-AGI). Pierre died on his plantation on 21 November 1796, amid an apparent plague. His widow’s death followed on 30 August 1798. (*Natch. 1729-1803*, nos. 3026, 3047.) The extant inventory of the estate that the couple left to their numerous children comprises 172 pages and offers a rich verbal portrait of their home furnishings and plantations, as well as valuable genealogical information on their slave families (Doc. 1857, French Arch., Natch.).

Children of Pierre⁴ Dion Derbanne and his wife, Marie Louise LeClerc:

- i GEORGE⁵ b. Pointe Coupée 10 Feb. 1752 (Reg. 1:113, St. François de la Pointe Coupée); n.f.r. (the fact that his mother soon conceived again may indicate that he d. shortly after birth).
- ii PIERRE/“PIERRIT” GUYON b. Pointe Coupée 19 March 1753 (Reg. 1:128, St. François de la Pointe Coupée), d. Natchitoches 15 Sept. 1812 (Succ. Bk. 1:105ff., Natch.); m. Natchitoches 13 Feb. 1783 MARIE FRANÇOISE BREVEL (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1065). As “Pierre Derbane, the son,” and “Pierrit Darbonne,” he appears on the 1780 and 1782 militia rolls.
- 5 iii JEAN BAPTISTE bp. Pointe Coupée 20 March 1755 (Reg. 1:148, St. François de la Pointe Coupée); m. MARIE THERESE ROY.
- iv MARIE LOUISE b. 5 Feb. 1758 at Avoyelles, a burgeoning post situated between Opelousas and Natchitoches, bp. Natchitoches the following 2 Sept. (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 689), d. after 1833, at the family’s plantation in the Isle Brevelle section of Cane River, below Natchitoches (Old Natch. Recs., vol. 2:6-7, no. 128, Cammie Henry Coll., NSU Arch.); m. Natchitoches 20 April 1787 FRANÇOIS LAVESPERE (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1518).
- v MARIE VICTOIRE bp. Natchitoches 8 Oct. 1760 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 421), d., although “hardly sick,” on 9 June 1797 at the Cane River plantation of herself and her husband (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 3035); m. Natchitoches 6 Sept. 1786 PIERRE CHALER dit VERSAILLES (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1480).
- vi JOSEPH b. Natchitoches ca. 1764-67 (1787 Cens. of Natch., Leg. 201, PPC-AGI), d. Natchitoches Parish 30 July 1840 (Reg. 15, No. 1840-9, St. François des Natch.); m. (1) Natchitoches 22 Nov. 1802 MARIE CATHERINE BROSSET (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 948), (2) Natchitoches 11 April 1831 MARIE LOUISE HANSELMAN (Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages, 1818-50* [Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1985], hereafter *Natch. Church Marr.*, no. 186.). Too young to see service in the 1779-80 Gálvez campaigns, Joseph does appear on the 1782 roll in the company of Capt. Louis Bormé.
- vii LOUIS PIERRE b. Natchitoches 4 Aug. 1766 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 879); m. Natchitoches 9 Nov. 1797 MARIE FRANÇOISE RACHAL (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 3426). He seems to be the “Niny, fils de Pierre Derbanne,” who first appeared on the 1782 militia roll. As Louis Derbanne, he is also named on the 1787 company roster along with brother Joseph (Leg. 13, PPC-AGI); both were said to be “sick at home,” although it is probable that they were disinclined to

travel the 25 miles or so into the post for muster. A notary in the Cloutierville area of Natchitoches Parish, Louis left no children by his wife (Succ. 675, Marie Françoise Rachal, Natch.).

viii JEAN PIERRE b. Natchitoches 10 Dec. 1768 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 944), d. in childhood (not named in the succession of either parent).

ix EMANUEL b. 1777 (1787 Cens. of Natch.); m. Natchitoches 2 Feb. 1804 MARGUERITE DENIS (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 954).

THE TWO JEAN BAPTISTE DERBANNES

The foregoing genealogical reconstruction reveals the existence of two, and only two, male members of this family who meet the necessary criteria—i.e., they (1) bore the name *Jean Baptiste* and (2) were of proper age to see militia duty during the 1780-82 period: Jean Baptiste, son of Gaspard⁴; and Jean Baptiste, son of Pierre⁴. Of the two, Jean Baptiste Gaspard (as he was frequently called in the records although he was not baptized as such) has been found no place other than Natchitoches. By contrast, Jean Baptiste, *fils* Pierre—who was actually born at the lower post of Pointe Coupée, appears as an adult in the records of Natchitoches, Pointe Coupée, and Opelousas. After his early death, two of his young daughters returned to Natchitoches to live among their Derbanne relatives and remained there for the duration of their lives. A fuller account of these two men follows.

4 JEAN BAPTISTE GASPARD⁵ DERBANNE (*Gaspard*⁴, *François*³ *Guyon* dit *Dion Després Derbanne*, *François*² *Guyon Després*, *Jean*¹ *Guyon*, *Jacques*^A *Guyon*) was born at Natchitoches circa November 1752 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 548). He died at Natchitoches between the 1 November 1808 birth of his youngest daughter (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 280) and the 15 April 1819 marriage of his son François (Reg. 11:11, St. François des Natch.).

On 9 September 1777, the parish priest placed into the church register an entry stating the marriage of Juan Bautista Derbanne, "legitimate son of Gaspar," to one Marie Felicité Dupain, daughter of the post officer Pierre Dupain. Curiously, the entry was marked through, after a litany of detail on both families (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1037). The following 10 April, Mlle. Dupain gave birth to a son, whose father was identified as Jean Baptiste Armand; and in June that couple wed (*Natch. 1729-1803*, nos. 1738, 1044). Young Derbanne, with no further haste to marry, remained a bachelor until 13 May 1784, at which time he wed MARIE HÉLEINE BREVEL, daughter of the French-Indian Jean Baptiste Brevel, *fils*, and his wife, Marie Françoise Poissot (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1077).

Jean Baptiste Gaspard, who apparently resided nowhere other than the post of Natchitoches, makes his first appearance on a militia roll in June

1772, at which time he is described as 5' 4" (French measure) and aged twenty (Doc. 741, French Arch., Natch.). He was the only Jean Baptiste Derbanne at the post in 1779, when a militiaman of that name (rendered by the Spanish scribe as Juan Bautista Bernabane) was chosen to accompany the long-time Natchitoches commandant, Athanase Mauguet de Mézières, to Texas where the latter was to assume the provincial governorship (Roll dated 27 Sept. 1779, *Historia*, vol. 299, Archivo General y Público, Mexico City). De Mézières died shortly afterwards; his riflemen, including Jean Baptiste, returned to the post of Natchitoches.

Children of Jean Baptiste Gaspard⁵ Derbanne and his wife, Marie Héleine Brevet:

- i JEAN BAPTISTE⁶ b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 17 Feb. 1785 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1874), d. before the Jan. 1847 settlement of his mother's succession; m. (1) ca. 1808 MARIE MARCELLITE DUPRÉ (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 297 records the baptism of a legitimate daughter, b. 23 Jan. 1809), (2) Natchitoches Parish⁴ 23 April 1829 MARIE LOUISE OSITE BOTIEN dite ST. ANDRÉ (Reg. 11:62, St. François des Natch.).
- ii PAUL ALEXANDER b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 25 Jan. 1787, d. as a child (*Natch. 1729-1803*, nos. 1508, 1932).
- iii MARIE ASPASIE b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 11 Jan. 1789 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1979); m. 28 Dec. 1809 ANTOINE BARTHELEMY RACHAL (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 995).
- iv child b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction in late 1790 or early 1791, d. 3 Feb. 1791 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 1462).
- v LOUIS SOLASTIE b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 18 Feb. 1794 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 2192), d. before the 1847 settlement of his mother's succession; m. Natchitoches Parish 4 June 1820 MARIE HÉLEINE LEMOINE (Reg. 11:23, St. François des Natch.).
- vi FRANÇOIS b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 19 Dec. 1797 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 2873), d. before the settlement of his mother's succession in 1847; m. (1) Natchitoches Parish 15 April 1819 MARIE LOUISE CARMELITE LANGLOIS, (2) there 11 June 1829 TRANQUILLINE LACOUR (Reg. 11:11, 65, St. François des Natch.).
- vii MARIE DES NEIGES b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 19 April 1800 (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 2988); m. Natchitoches Parish 20 April 1819 CESAIRE THOMASSIE (Reg. 11:12, St. François des Natch.).
- viii LOUIS GASPARD b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 20 Nov. 1802 (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 80); m. Natchitoches Parish 10 April 1822 his cousin MARIE EMERANTE POISSOT (Reg. 11:83, St. François des Natch.).
- ix JACQUES DUFROIS b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 6 Feb. 1805 (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 136), d. 1849 (Succ. 669, J.D. Derbanne and Wife, Natch.); m. (1) ca. 1826-31 MARIE EUPHEMIE ROUBIEU (*Natch. Church Marr.*, 161), (2) MARIE CATHERINE BEAUDOIN (Succ. 669).
- x MARIE URANIE (IRENE) b. in the Natchitoches jurisdiction 1 Nov. 1801 (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 280), d. prior to her husband's 5 Oct. 1832 remarriage (*Natch. Church Marr.*, no. 225); m. NARCISSE QUIERRY (KERRY).

⁴ That is, the civil parish.

5 JEAN BAPTISTE⁵ DERBANNE (*Pierre*⁴, *François*³ *Guyon* dit *Dion Després Derbanne*, *François*² *Guyon Després*, *Jean*¹ *Guyon*, *Jacques*^A *Guyon*) was born at Pointe Coupée on 20 March 1755 (Reg. 1:106, St. François de la Pointe Coupée). Growing up at Natchitoches, he appears to have spent time with his aunt and uncle-in-law, Jeanne and François Manne of Opelousas, as on 17 November 1778, he executed his contract of marriage with their near neighbor, MARIE THERESE GENEVIEVE ROY (Winston DeVille and Jacqueline O. Vidrine, *Colonial Louisiana Marriage Contracts: Marriage Contracts of the Opelousas Post* [Baton Rouge, 1962], 26, no. 41). Young Thérèse had been born at the post of Pointe Coupée on 18 October 1764, daughter of Perrine LaCour, widow of Joseph Roy, by an unknown father (Reg. 1:271, St. François de la Pointe Coupée). The first child of Jean Baptiste and Thérèse was baptized at Opelousas in September of the following year (1779), at the age of two months (Reg. 1:21, Ph. of St. Landry).

During the next five years, no trace has been found of the family at the Opelousas post; and no children have been found born to the couple in any jurisdiction. It is, however, likely he (and not his cousin Jean Baptiste) who witnessed the marriage of his brother Pierre Jr. at Natchitoches on 13 February 1783. During the month of March 1784 he fathered his second child by Thérèse; and there follows a relatively stable pattern of births until his death and burial on 24 October 1792 (Reg. 1:17, St. Landry).

Known children of Jean Baptiste⁵ Derbanne, *fils Pierre*, and his wife, Marie Thérèse Geneviève Roy:

- i SIDONIE⁶ b. Opelousas ca. July 1779; m. there 17 Aug. 1802, MICHEL PRUDHOMME (Reg. 1:21, 108, St. Landry), a prosperous planter whose descendants include Louisiana's famed chef, K-Paul.
- ii MELANIE b. Opelousas 21 Dec. 1784 (Reg. 1:51). On 11 Aug. 1803, having moved to Natchitoches to live among her father's family, she m. JEAN BAPTISTE BREVEL III, son of J.B. Brevel, *fils*, and Marie Françoise Poissot (*Natch. 1729-1803*, no. 3453). Melanie appears to have died in the eastern fringes of Natchitoches Parish (present Grant Parish) between the dates of the 1830 and 1840 censuses.
- iii LAIMONT (poss. CLEMENT) b. Opelousas 15 Oct. 1786 (Reg. 1:70). This child appears as *Laimont* on the list of children named as legitimate offspring of Jean Baptiste Derbanne and grandchildren of deceased Pierre Derbanne of Natchitoches—a list given by his mother on 10 Dec. 1796 (Petition of Thérèse Roy, Succ. of Pierre Derbanne, Opel. Rec. Coll., La. State Archives). Published compendia of subsequent Opelousas-area church and civil records cite his baptism as *Zenon* and provide a garbled litany of records under the names *Zenon*, *Laurent*, and *Clement Darbonne*, variously and simultaneously identified as husbands of CELESTE ROY and JACINTE CARRIERE (Donald J. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records* [Eunice, La., 1974-], 1:152; 2:228-29). Restricted access to the original registers of that period has precluded resolving the question of his identity or sorting him from one Laurent Dupré dit Dar-

- bonne/Terrebonne who also resided at Opelousas.
- iv EMERANTE (var. EMELIE) bp. Opelousas 26 Aug. 1789; m. there 10 Feb. 1812
URSIN CARRIERE (Reg. 1:93, 221).
- v ROSALINE bp. Opelousas 28 May 1791 (Reg. 1:102); m. Natchitoches 16 Nov.
1807 JEAN BAPTISTE JULIEN RACHAL (*Natch. 1800-1826*, no. 979-a), by whom
she had 14 children prior to his death on 16 July 1836 (Succ. Bk. 10:62, 454,
Natch.).

EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

One of the most difficult problems faced by genealogical researchers is the identification of the person represented by names on one or another ancient list. Various factors do help to build the needed evidence—including naming patterns, associates, occupations, personality traits, and signatures—when such details exist. If none is present, then two other approaches can be beneficially employed: the reconstruction of each individual's life year by year (ideally day by day) and the reconstruction of the entire family to which he or she belongs.

Using these approaches, the present case would seem to yield an acceptable conclusion. The 1780 Natchitoches militia roll includes two listings for the name *Jean Baptiste Derbane*, one as a rifleman and one as a *cannonier*. Two such men—and only two such men—came to adulthood during this era at Natchitoches. The obvious conclusion would be that both men served in the Gálvez campaign of 1780, one being a *cannonier* and the other a rifleman. Yet, this conclusion would be in error, because one other crucial principle has not been applied. The accumulation of all detail relating to the “right” name is not enough. An exhaustive study of all extended family members is not enough. *One must also scrutinize all relevant records for whatever patterns, sequences, and repetitions they might suggest.*

The crucial 1780 roster carries 126 names. It is divided into two lists and grouped into the following sequence:

<u>Infantry</u>		<u>Cavalry</u>	
Officers	[3]	Officers	[3]
Sergeants	[3]	Lower Officers	[3]
Corporals	[3]	Cavalrymen	[40]
Drummers	[1]	<i>Cannoniers</i> (1 sergeant, 8 men)	[9]
Riflemen	[55]	Free people of color used as couriers	[6]
Total	[65]	Total	[61]

A clear division exists between the two lists. The commandant's signature appears at the end of the infantry list, immediately following the last rifleman. It appears again at the end of the cavalry list, following the last courier.

The two companies appear to be of comparable size. Family representation on these lists is split: One brother or cousin might serve in the infantry, another in the cavalry. All this is to be expected.

One possible peculiarity can also be defined: Of the 126 names, eight appear twice, as in the case of Jean Baptiste Derbanne. Considering the number of families that were then producing third-generation offspring in the area, as well as the frustrating degree to which French families repeated the same names over and again (even among brothers), there would—on the surface—seem to be nothing uncommon about the situation. Yet, closer analysis reveals three other patterns:

- All eight of the duplicated names fall into the list of *cannoniers*.
- The only *cannonier* whose name is not repeated is the sergeant.
- Four of the names of *cannoniers* are duplicated on the infantry list; four on the cavalry list.

While the structure of the two lists for 1780 seems clear and logical—two companies of relatively equal size, the infantry with fifty-five riflemen and the cavalry with forty cavalymen and nine *cannoniers*—that structure is surely misleading. While the *cannoniers* are listed on the cavalry roll, they clearly belong to both companies. The *cannonier* section, rather than listing additional men, is actually an *extraction from the main roster* of men with one particular skill. Its placement on the cavalymen roll appears to be a matter of clerical convenience rather than military organization.

If this conclusion is correct, then one further extrapolation appears justified: For each of the eight duplicated names, there should be just one man by that name in the district who was then of age for obligatory military service. Further examination of all extant post records (civil and ecclesiastical) has confirmed that hypothesis. There can be found only one such Antoine Vastocu, one Joseph Martin, one Pierre Broquedis, one Guillaume Chevert, one François Toutin, one Joseph Jan Rich (Jean Ris), and one “Du Bois, the son.” Only in the Derbanne family did there exist two men by the same pertinent name.

CONCLUSION

The key Revolutionary-era roll of 1780 at Natchitoches carries two listings for “Jean Baptiste Derbane,” in two separate military categories. The reconstructed family contains two men of that name and appropriate age. The reconstructed activities of each make it clear that one was a permanent resident of the post and that the other—while he married in another dis-

trict—was conspicuously absent from the other locale and periodically appeared in the records of his own family in Natchitoches during the crucial years.

Did both Jean Baptiste Derbannes serve with the Natchitoches militia during the Gálvez Campaigns of the American Revolution. Almost certainly, no. The 1779 roll listed only one such man. The 1782 roll listed only one such man. The only roll on which there *seem* to be two such men was the year in which *all* men with one particular skill—that of *cannonier*—were singled out for a separate listing under that one skill. Given these facts, it must be concluded that the *one* Jean Baptiste Derbanne who served in the militia from Natchitoches, where service was compulsory for all able-bodied white males, was the Jean Baptiste who was a permanent resident of that post—i.e., Jean Baptiste Gaspard⁵ Derbanne, not Jean Baptiste⁵ Derbanne *fils* Pierre.

The lesson to be learned is just as clear: It does not suffice merely to analyze the data that relate to one's own ancestor. It does not suffice merely to reconstruct the whole family, even when the parties were considerate enough to record explicitly all parent-child relationships. Researchers must also analyze the *structure of the records* in which the ancestor appears—the sequence of names and the grouping of categories. In the end, one must also, quite often, *extend the research to other individuals who may be totally unrelated but happen to be grouped with one's ancestor*. Doing so yields a far clearer understanding of the circumstances that existed and far more accurate conclusions about the forebear whose identity and activities are important to us.

Ms. Mills is the editor (with her husband, Dr. Gary B. Mills) of the National Genealogical Society Quarterly. Her address is 1732 Ridgedale Dr., Tuscaloosa AL 35406.

COLD BATHS IN IPSWICH

Contributed by D.L. Greene, Editor

From the town records of Ipswich, Massachusetts, 3 March 1723/4:

A petition of Doct^r Thomas Berry, Shewing that as it has been found by Experience that a Cold Bath is of great Service to Mankind, & there being a Suitable & convenient place to erect one at the upper End of the Spring in Hogg Lane So called nigh the House of John Grow, praying that the Town would please to make a Grant to him & his Heirs of Twenty feet of Ground below the Bank at the Foot of the upper Spring, to Erect an Edifice for the use abovesaid, the Town reserving to themselves the whole Benefit of the lower great Spring, which is in no ways to be diverted [*petition granted*].