

**PARALLEL LIVES:
Philippe de La Renaudière and Philippe (de) Renault
Directors of the Mines, Company of the Indies**

By Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG*

Professor Marcel Giraud, in his five-volume masterpiece *L'Histoire de la Louisiane Française*, mentions an identity problem that has long plagued genealogists and historians of early Louisiana. Two men of strikingly similar names existed in the same corner of the colony at the same time and held virtually the same title. Giraud offers this synopsis of the problem:

Commissioners of the [regime] in 1721 [decided] to provide for all the needs of an ironmaster from Maubeuge who had agreed to prospect for and exploit the mineral resources of the Illinois country. *Two men applied themselves to the same task, Philippe de La Renaudière and Philippe Renault. Sometimes mistakenly treated as one person owing to the similarity of their names, they were in fact two different people. They both settled down in the Illinois country, married there, and engaged in mining, but it was the second, Renault, who played the more important role and ended by acquiring the title of “director general of the mines,” as mentioned in the parish register of Fort de Chartres. He was the Maubeuge ironmaster just mentioned, and he seemed qualified by his background to take on the work expected of him. Nothing is known about the past of the other man, La Renaudière, who arrived in the same period, 1719 or 1720. Renault, however, received prompter backing from the Company, which instructed Boisbriant to give him all the help he needed, perhaps because he seemed well placed to succeed owing to his having formed a small company with the eldest of the Dartaguiette brothers and a man named Béranguier.*¹

On the larger issue, Giraud is correct. On other points, some clarification and/or correction is needed. A close scrutiny of the records created by each of the men reveals that

- both were at one time or another called a “mining engineer” and both were at one time or another called “Director of Mines”—as well as other variations on the theme.
- their names were indeed similar, and scribes confused the matter by recording numerous phoenetic variants—particularly for the Maubeuge man of the shorter name. However, the latter habitually signed his name in a distinctive way that helps modern researchers distinguish between the two. While Giraud settled on the spelling “Renaut” for the Maubeuge man, his signature in Illinois was consistently “Renault.”

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1. This quote is extracted from Brian Pearce’s translation of volume 5, published as *A History of French Louisiana: The Company of the Indies, 1723–1732* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 441–42. All italics throughout this paper are my own.

- neither man married in Illinois. La Renaudière brought his wife to the colonies when he immigrated. Renault did have a grown son who joined him in Illinois, temporarily; but there is no evidence of a wife or other children.
- something *is* known about the origins of La Renaudière. As “Clerk and Commissioner of Mines,” he is traceable to a specific ship roll of 1718. Subsequently, after his service ended in Illinois and his family relocated at the South Louisiana frontier outpost of Natchitoches, his survivors created a record that identifies his birthplace as Perigord and that of his wife as Vitré in Bretagne—both in France.

The purpose of the present paper is twofold: First, to assemble the known Louisiana-Illinois records for these two men in an effort to clearly sort their identities and actions. In doing so, I will quote from—and sometimes attempt to correct—the published translations and abstracts. Second, to analyze the records for clues that may help modern genealogists fill existing holes in the known life of Louisiana’s first mining commissioner, Philippe de La Renaudière, and the children he produced here.

Philippe de La Renaudière Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722

Arrival in the colony

The emigration date of La Renaudière—the first of the pair to appear in the colony’s records—can be pinpointed better than just “1719 or 1720.” Extant ship rolls show:

15 November 1718

Roll of the *Comte de Toulouse*—being a list of the employees of the Company of the West, miners, soldiers, tobacco workers, concessionaries and their people, and “others” [embarkation point not stated].

[no. 5 on list]

The Sr. Renaudiere. Clerk of the Company and Conductor of Mines. . . . [also] the *wife of Sr. Renaudiere*.²

2. Archives of the Colonies, G¹, 464. Published versions, with slightly different wording, are available in Glenn R. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Claitors, 1970), 1:22; and Neil J. Toups, *Mississippi Valley Pioneers* (Lafayette, La.: Neilson Publishing Co., 1970), 34.

Philippe Renault (var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renault) Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

Arrival in the colony

Various published accounts place Renault’s first appearance in the colony at either 1719 or 1722. The known *original* records are vague on the point—with 1722 being the earliest date explicitly connected to him. Giraud summarizes the governmental records (which he carefully identifies) as follows:

“After working for some time at La Mothe’s mine, [*Renault*] prospected for copper, without much success, along the Illinois River. In 1722 he began to open a new mine up the Maramec (now Meramec) River, about thirty miles from Fort de Chartres and west of the Mississippi. . . . To protect himself from Indian attacks . . . he built a small fort made of stakes on the road to the mine, on the east bank of the Mississippi not far from the confluence of its Maramec tributary. Diron described the fort as being horse-shoe-shaped. He put it on his map of 1732, under the name Fort Saint-Philippe. . . . He said he saw within

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Although the passenger roll does not name the wife, documents in both Illinois and Louisiana identify her as Perrine Pivert. The following abstracts from Illinois church records adequately establish not only her identity but also Philippe's continued authority over the Illinois mines:

10 February 1721

Kaskaskia baptism

Pierre, legitimate son of Pierre Chabot and Reine Mercier, born 5 February 1721. Godparents: Pierre d'Artigette, captain, and *Perrine Piver*.³

1 July 1721

Kaskaskia baptism

Philippe, small slave of five or six years. Godparents: *Sieur Philippe de la Renaudière, Director of Mines of the Company of the West*, and Catherine Juliette.⁴

7 July 1721

Kaskaskia baptism

Charles de la Renaudière, legitimate son of *Monsieur Philippe de la Renaudière, Commissioner of Mines for the Company of the West*, and *Perinne Piver*. Child was born 3 July. Godparents: *Sieur LaGardeur de Lisle* and Agnes Philippe, who cannot sign.⁵

Natchitoches researchers will recognize in these Illinois baptisms the names of Perrine and her son Charles, from whom Louisiana's La Renaudières (Larnodiers) descend.

Changes in Status

The years 1723 and 1724 were critical in the rivalry of the two Philippes for control over the Illinois mines. La Renaudière continues to appear on the official payroll. Renaud does not. Yet, records of these two years do not explicitly refer to La Renaudière as "Commissioner of Mines."

3. Register 1, p. 13, Notre-Dame d'Immaculée Conception, microcopy C-2899, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18. Agnes, the following year, married the Illinois *garde magasin*, Nicolas Michael Chassin.

Philippe Renault (var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut) Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

it in 1723 four houses and a timber-frame church. A detachment from Fort de Chartres formed the garrison at that time."¹

By contrast, an undocumented narrative of 1982 asserts:

*Renault had come from France in spring 1719, at the head of 200 miners and workers, with the purpose of exploiting the mines of silver and lead that had been discovered in this region. For lodging his men, he had constructed a small village, a mile east of the Mississippi, and baptized it, after his own given name, Saint-Philippe. At the beginning, its civil acts were inscribed at Kaskaskia; but, toward 1762, there was constructed a small chapel there. . . . The first stone house of Illinois was constructed by Philippe Renault on his concession between the years 1722 and 1723.*²

The 1719 arrival attributed to Renault is confirmed by no records I have seen to date. "Lost" ship records do continue to surface; possibly one may be discovered for Renault and his 200 miners. Until then, it seems likely that the immigration record of La Renaudière is being assigned here to Renaud—settlers who left France in November 1718 would have arrived in Illinois in the spring of 1719. The *Comte de Toulouse* roll, however, does not include 200 miners; its "miner" list adds up to only 21 people—14 men, 4 wives, and 3 children.

Changes in Status

Renault emerges from his relative obscurity in the years 1723–24. His political and economic rise is said to have begun with a sizable concession of land. According to the previously cited undocumented history:

1. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:444.

2. Marthe Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d'Amérique (XVIIIe siècle)*, 2 vols. (Montreal: Éditions Bergeron, 1982, 1984), 2:299. The excerpt provided in the present paper is an English extract of Fairbault-Beauregard's French text.

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1 April 1723

Fort Chartres succession

List of property and debts of LaFrance includes “the sum of sixty livres, remaining from the hundred livres that [the notary] *paid to Larenaudiere* previously.”⁶

?? September 1723

Kaskaskia baptism

Marie Françoise, daughter of *Philippe de la Renaudière* and *Perrine Pivare*. Born 3 September. Godparents: Giradot, officer; Françoise LaVigne Rivart.⁷

The fact that La Renaudière remained on the company payroll is evidenced by the following document—a payroll that does not include Philippe Renault:

8 March 1724

Employees under Orders from the Council

[First employee]

La Renaudière, salary 600 livres per year.⁸

The list segregates employees into two categories: those of the Company of the Indies and those of the newly formed (1722) Provincial Council. The Company maintained three employees in Illinois at salaries of 600 to 2,000 livres. By contrast, the thirteen employees of the Council were paid 500 to 1,200 livres. La Renaudière’s

6. Chartres, Illinois, Miscellaneous Notarial Records, translated by Lawrie Dean in Margaret Kimball Brown and Lawrie Cena Dean, *The Village of Chartres in Colonial Illinois, 1720–65* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), 807–08, doc. K-342.

7. The godmother was wife of the churchwarden Joseph Lamy. See Natalia M. Belting, *Kaskaskia under the French Regime* (1948; reprinted, New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1975), 49, 79, citing parish extracts from Colonies, G¹, 412:5ff., Archives Nationales, Paris.

8. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 1:224, citing Colonies, B⁴³, 374–78, Archives Nationales.

This repository also holds a “Mémorial relating to the discoveries of mines” penned by La Renaudière on 23 August 1723 (Colonies C13C 4 f. 105–06). A copy has been ordered, but not received.

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“In June 1723, M. de Boisbriand and M. des Ursins conceded to *Philippe François de Renault, director of Mines of the Company of the Indies*, a square league of land situated six miles north of Fort de Chartres.”³

An actual record of this concession has proved elusive. Similarly, no document of that year can be found which accords this title to Renault. Giraud, writing of concessions in the Illinois area, concludes:

“Along the Mississippi were the habitations of commandant Boisbriand and the Company’s senior clerk, La Loire des Ursins, who seem to have been partners in a common enterprise. Near Fort de Chartres was that of the storekeeper Chassin. . . . Renault had begun in 1723 to establish a smaller one under the shelter of Fort Saint Philippe, which he had just erected as a defense for the Maramec mine. . . . This was abandoned as a result of attacks by the Fox Indians, however, and the habitation resumed its activity only after that tribe had been destroyed.”⁴

Chartres’s notarial records of that summer 1723 do attest Renault’s rising affluence in several ways—the most obvious being the attachment to him of a personal title of respect that was reserved for the upper strata of his society:

20 July 1723

Fort Chartres succession

Inventory of goods in house of Reverend Father Querebin, belonging to the one Lesueur, deceased. Includes a note for 3 livres of powder, owed by one Poudret, to be collected from “*Monsieur Renault*.”⁵

21 August 1723

Jean Martin of village of Orvrl in Champagne contracts with “*Monsieur Renault*” to work as a day

3. Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d’Amérique*, 2:299. The translation is my own.

4. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:458.

5. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 811–12, doc. K-346.

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shift from the aegis of the Company to the Council would later have even more serious impact upon his career.

Two months after the employee list was drafted, La Renaudière reappears in the Illinois church records. Once again, there is no reference to his official position:

9 May 1724

Kaskaskia marriage

Pierre Derene and Françoise Robert. After 3 bans. Groom: son of Pierre Derenne and Louise Fremont of parish and village of St. Bonnet, diocese of Poitiers. Bride: widow of deceased Pierre Doneleir. Witnesses: Girardot, L. Turpin, *La Renaudière*, J. Potier.⁹

Giraud's reconstruction of events from January to July 1724 is more informative—describing our man, at this point, as Illinois's *mining engineer*:

“The only attempt at reconnaissance and exploration of the inland areas [west of the Mississippi] was the one led by Véniard de Bourgmont during 1723 and 1724. . . . [Against daunting odds] Bourgmont was able to start building a new post, to be known as Fort d'Orléans. He chose a site on the north bank of the Missouri, upstream from the confluence of the Grand River, near where the Wakenda River enters, in a region close to where the Missouri tribe lived and where the Indians' stories gave reason to believe there were deposits of copper. . . .

“Bourgmont left Fort d'Orléans, intending to go to the Paducahs. It was the beginning of summer. A fairly large force had been assembled, divided into two groups. The first contingent, bearing goods, set off along the river in pirogues, under the command of Robert de Saint-Ange.

“The second, consisting of Saint-Ange de Bellerive and the *mining engineer La Renaudière*, with a troop of a hundred Missouris and sixty Osages, took the landward route at the beginning of July. It traveled beside the river, crossing it after eight days and

9. Register 1, p. 33, Notre-Dame, Kaskaskias.

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laborer for one year, beginning on the first of the next month, to do all he shall require . . . on the condition that [Martin's] wife will be wet-nurse at the residence where [Martin is placed] and that whenever the said *Renault* needs to have silks or other things mended, she shall put her hand to it and that the pay for the year shall be the sum of five hundred livres, payable from the Storehouse of the Royal Indies Company.” Signed: “*Renault*.”⁶

22 August 1723

Andre Chabernon engages himself to “*Monsieur Renault* for service at his concession in the capacity of laborer . . . on the condition that the said *Sieur Renault* shall pay [him] four hundred francs from the Storehouse of the Royal Indies Company and that [Chabernon] shall be permitted to harvest for his own account four arpents of prairie which shall be sowed at the expense of the said *Sieur Renault*.”⁷

Three details in the above worker contracts warrant special note:

- Mode of payment: Renault's payment of these workers in cash from the company storehouse reflects the financial backing he had from Company officials. According to Giraud, he repaid part of the debt in 1724 by delivering 20,000 pounds of lead, and the company agreed to let him repay the remainder gradually—an arrangement the Fox raids aborted.⁸
- Style of signature: Names in this era were often spelled phonetically, but men tended to have a distinctive signature—using one spelling and one style to discourage forgery. Thus, the signature provides an important identifier for this Philippe.
- Female employment: The reference to Martin's wife as a “wet nurse” and “mending silks” for *Renault* might imply that he had a wife of childbearing years. However, neither parish registers nor the subsequent censuses reveal any such family. Wet-nurses might also be needed by the wives of other workers. The service was not

6. Ibid., 812, doc. K-347.

7. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 813, doc. K-348.

8. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:443.

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camping on the south bank, not very far from the village of the Kansas. . . . The reception was warm and hearty. Big meals were served . . . and speeches were delivered that testified to the desire on both sides for a general reconciliation with the Paducahs. But a sickness that Bourgmont called ‘hot fever’ soon attacked the soldiers of the escort and Bourgmont himself, then spread among the Missouris. . . . After a distribution of presents in exchange for the horses and pelts the Kansas had given to the French, the group set off in a mass movement that was both picturesque and spectacular.

“The departure took place on July 24, “ ‘in battle order, with a drum beating time for the march.’ The Kansas numbered three hundred warriors, followed by three hundred women, heavily laden, five hundred children, and several hundred dogs, many of the latter hitched to travois in order to drag the supplies and camping equipment.” Ten miles later, Bourgmont got sick and was carried back to Fort d’Orléans. “The expedition itself then broke up. . . . This marked the first contact with the Paducahs or Apaches, and it soon was followed by other contacts between them and the Kansas, as if the peace movement advocated by Bourgmont were beginning to spread. . . . The expedition had gone successfully and with a certain style. But it had no real consequences [although] the peace made with the Paducahs was certainly important, especially for the future of the French establishments in the Illinois country.”¹⁰

Continuing his emphasis on Bourgmont, rather than the engineer, Giraud reports that Bourgmont left for New Orleans almost immediately—accompanied by a delegation of fifteen Indians from the Missouri and Illinois tribes. In January 1725 the Bourgmont party (including the Indians) embarked for France.

The possibility that La Renaudière may have descended to New Orleans with Bourgmont, for business in the capital, is suggested by two pieces of negative evidence: he appears in no Illinois records for the next

10. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:445–53.

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merely a convenience for the rich; it could be a necessity for a family of any economic status, in which the mother produced insufficient milk. Similarly, the reference to “silk” does not imply a wife for Renault; silk shirts and stockings were also worn by affluent males of this society.

The year 1725 marks the first known reference to Renault as Illinois’s “Director of Mines:”

1 February 1725

Fort de Chartres sale

Pierre Bourdon and Francois Bibo . . . sell to “*Mr. Renen, director of the mines, residing at Fort St. Philippe*” their team . . . one cow and two calves which are actually in the possession of the said *Mr. Renan*. The said [sellers] warrant their sale . . . without intent of ever taking any recourse against the said *Mr. Renan* for the sale of the said livestock.” The document bears the label “1725 – sale of a cow and two horses by Pierre Bourdon and Francois Bibeault to *Mon-sieur Philippe* on the 1st of February.”⁹

The above document—as published—is ambiguous in its spelling; it could be argued that Renen/Renan was a corruption of either *Renault* or *Renaudière*. However, the reference to the purchaser’s residence at Fort St. Philippe effectively rules out La Renaudière, as does scrutiny of the original document. Stylistically, *Renan* and *Renau* are virtually indistinguishable in this era; phoenetically *Renau*, *Renaud*, *Renault*, and *Renaut* are also. Phoenetic spelling by the scribe and a misreading of one or two letters by a transcriber are far more likely than the possibility that the notary repeatedly omitted the entire last syllable from the name of the mining director. This conclusion is confirmed by a record created seven months later:

29 September 1725

Fort de Chartres baptism

Jean Baptiste Philippe LaLande, born 25th September to the legitimate marriage of Jean Bapt. Lalande and Catherine Sabana Kie8el. Godparents: “*Mr.*

9. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 826, doc. K-363.

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nine months; and his wife failed to produce a child in 1725—as might be expected from the 1721 and 1723 deliveries of record for her. However, La Renaudière clearly did not accompany the cortege to France, as his presence is noted again in Illinois before the Indian delegation returned in 1726:

1 June 1725
Fort de Chartres notarial record
Nicolas Michel Chassin, councilor and storekeeper for the colony, agreement with Sieur Laplume. Witnessed by *Sieur Renaudière*.¹¹

The census of the colony that was ordered to be taken on 1 January 1726 (but was not necessarily taken on that date)¹² eliminates the last vestige of doubt that both a Sieur La Renaudière and a Sieur Renaud existed simultaneously in Illinois. Both men are listed. The data shown below and in Renaud’s corresponding column at right underscore the widening divide in their fortunes.

Name:	<i>La Renaudière</i> [no given name]
Wife:	Yes
Children:	2
Domestics:	None
Slaves:	None
Cleared land:	?

11. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 850–51, doc. K-379.

12. AC, G¹, 464. Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d’Amérique*, 2: 209–11 abstracts this census, omitting all landholding information. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2:34, provides more-complete data.

The date on which the census was actually taken differed in the various communities. At Natchitoches, for example, the census could not have been taken until at least late January, because it includes a wife for the settler Cromir [Cronier]. Cronier did not have a wife on 1 January 1726. He wed Marie Sousse at New Orleans on 17 January and would have had to make the lengthy trip upriver before Marie could have been counted by the Natchitoches commandant. For the marriage, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans Sacramental Records*, vol. 1, 1718–1750 (New Orleans: The Diocese, 1987), 60.

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Philippe Renault, Director General of Mines,” and Marie Magdeleine Quesnel.¹⁰

Renaud’s abandonment of his mines, amid Fox hostilities, apparently occurred in 1725. The colony’s census of 1 January 1726 places Renault on the concession owned by Pierre Dugué de Boisbriant (the new commandant-general of the Louisiana colony) and Marc Antoine de La Loire des Ursins (the Company’s chief clerk in Illinois). The context of the entry also suggests that Renault was in charge of the Boisbriant–La Loire operation:

ILLINOIS

*First entry:*¹¹
“On the farm of M[onsieurs] Boisbriant and Laloire”

Name:	M[onsieur] <i>Renaud</i>
Wife:	None
Children:	None
Domestics:	1
Slaves:	20 negroes
Cleared land:	100 arpents

For the next seven years, Philippe Renault remained active in Illinois—and upwardly mobile. However, he would not hold onto the coveted title, *Directeur of Mines*, any longer than La Renaudière had held it (four years in both cases). Extant Illinois records chronicle Renault’s activities in this period, as follows:

10. *Ibid.*, 9–10, doc. D-9, Ste. Anne’s Church. The “8” used by priests of upper Louisiana in writing Indian names represents a sound for which the French language had no equivalent letter.

As a caution against placing too much trust in any published source: Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population de forts Français*, 2:134, publishes this same baptismal record, spelling Philippe’s surname as *Renaud* and omitting the title.

11. Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d’Amérique*, 2:209–11, alphabetizes its transcript of the census. Thus, its entry completely detaches “Renaud” from the Boisbriant-Laloire concession and makes it appear that the 1 servant and 20 slaves belonged to “Renaud” himself. The 100 arpents of cleared land is also omitted from the Faribault-Beauregard transcript.

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La Renaudière's census data is also compatible, entirely, with the extant church records that report only two children prior to this time. At least one more child (Agnes Geneviève) and possibly another (Philippe) would follow—as records in Lower Louisiana subsequently reveal. However, no baptismal record has been found for either.

Concurrently, a significant change occurred in the colony's administration. The Provincial Council, La Renaudière's employer, was phased out.¹³ Thereafter, only one known Illinois record relates to the Sieur La Renaudière:

17 October 1727

Fort Chartres succession

Inventory of goods belonging to Sieur Pierre Girard, who died at the home of *Sieur La Renaudierre* and whose goods were in *La Renaudiere's* possession.¹⁴

The following spring, La Renaudière descended the Mississippi River to the colonial capital. His presence is documented there between 1 May and 9 November 1728:

1 May 1728

New Orleans court action

"Summons to Testify. At the instance of Mr. Claude Herpin, attorney for Mr. Perraut, Sheriff Dargaray notifies Messrs Perillaux, *de la Renaudierre*, Joseph Milon and Christophe Rozimond to appear tomorrow at 8 A.M. before Mr. Brusle to testify concerning some concealed . . . stolen goods of the Rottot estate."¹⁵

9 November 1728

New Orleans court action

Mr. Rossard, recorder, moves for the citation of *the*

13. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:441.

14. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 910–11, doc. K-422.

15. "Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 4 (October 1921): 483. A fragment of a document apparently relating to the first record above—mentioning "pelts"—appears in vol. 7 (October 1924): 687. For Perillaux, see Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, numerous entries.

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5 February (?) 1726

Fort de Chartres acknowledgment

Sieur Blot acknowledges "that the remainder of the note for [600] livres, payable in lead, signed by *Monsieur Renault* which [Blot] delivered to Gerome, after Gerome is paid what [Blot] owes him [shall] be given to Monsieur de Tonty."¹²

9 June 1726

Fort de Chartres agreement

Joseph Adam contracts with "*Monsieur Renau, Director-General of Mines* in the province of the Illinois . . . to build for him, at [Adam's] own cost and expense, for [Adam's] labor and for [Adam's] maintenance, a barn in the same fashion as the most beautiful in Kaskaskia, twenty-five feet in width by fifty feet in length and (illegible) and fenced, ready to build the stalls, and with the condition that on the side facing the great swamp the crossbeams or posts shall be placed in such a manner that there is the least light possible, and the three other faces shall be made in the ordinary way. The said frame shall be made of walnut, of sassafras or of mulberry, of wood well-squared and cured and the loft of the barn shall be at thirteen feet above the ground and the posts four feet in (illegible) and the loft fourteen feet high." Price: a filly two years old (already received), 200 livres of flour, a year-old pig, 5 minots of maize (due at once), and 200 livres of lead, which "Renaut" should remit that winter to Adam at Kaskaskia. "Renaut" was to have the wood transported to the site and the post-holes dug. Passed at St. Philippe du Grand Marest.¹³

19 July 1726

Fort de Chartres acknowledgment

Unsigned receipt for 468 livres "on the account of the concession of *Monsieur Renault*, in a bill of exchange dated January 20, 1725."¹⁴

12. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 875, doc. K-395.

13. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 884–85, doc. K-404.

14. *Ibid.*, 888, doc. K-408.

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Sieur De La Renaudière, to pay the sum of 99 francs, outstanding on a bill of sale. Notice served on *De La Renaudière*.¹⁶

No related records have been found to amplify the detail above. Both Perillaux and La Renaudière were attached to the former Superior Council—Perillaux as its notary and warehousekeeper in Illinois. The others called to testify with them are more obscure; but the fact they all appear as “Messieurs” implies that all enjoyed some respectability. Past this point, both Perillaux and La Renaudière—like the Provincial Council itself—fade from Louisiana’s records. Whether they returned to France, whether Philippe was dispatched to another post whose records have been lost, or whether he died in the capital remains uncertain.

Widow and Children

Nearly six years elapsed before further trace is found of this family. Perhaps they returned to France; one can only say they have not been found in the records of any post from Canada to the Gulf. In the summer of 1734, Perrine and their children surfaced at the southern outpost of Natchitoches, where she was called a “widow.” What drew the remnants of Philippe’s family to Natchitoches remains unknown. The likeliest explanations are (a) they had relatives there, yet unidentified; or (b) they migrated with another family.

(Perrine)

All the records created on the family at Natchitoches illustrates one striking point: the ease with which colonial circumstances could reduce to virtual poverty even those who arrived in “privileged” circumstances.

Perrine was clearly poor—if not totally impoverished. She lacked funds to buy a homestead or a lot on which to build shelter for herself and her children. She did have at

16. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5:502.

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In 1728 the Boisbriant–La Loire partnership dissolved. Boisbriant had lost his position as commandant-general of the colony, and de La Loire was dismissed as Illinois’s chief clerk. La Loire moved south to Natchez, and the goods of the partnership were auctioned. In the wake of these shifting political winds, Renault’s association with their concession apparently ended and he reactivated his own—Fox troubles notwithstanding. In 1728, after a lapse of five years, the Illinois records again place Renault on the St. Philippe concession.

8 December 1728

Fort Chartres auction of property belonging to the Messrs. de Boisbriant and Delaloere includes a yoke of oxen purchased for 500 livres by “*the Concession of Renault*.”¹⁵

Father and Son

In 1729, there emerges in Illinois the first evidence of kin for Philippe Renault—a son and namesake who was obviously an adult. Several documents created by Renault over the next dozen years reveal an efforts to establish this son in the Illinois country. Curiously, considering that Renault is credited with owning a very large tract of land, he did not set up that son on that concession. Rather, he purchased a separate tract, on credit, that he said would be paid for by the son, though he would stand as security for the debt:

20 February 1729

Fort Chartres sale

Pinguenet *dit* St. Roch, resident of Fort de Chartres, sells to “*Mr. Renault, Director of the Mines* in Illinois, acting for *Philippe Renault his son*,” land “in the prairie of Fort de Chartres, two arpents front on the Mississippi; bounded by Jean Baptiste Becquet, [Jean Baptiste] Place and the hills, with the buildings, cultivated lands, and generally all the

15. *Ibid.*, 366–68, doc. K-33. For Boisbriant and de La Loire’s changing fortunes, see Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5: 49–50, 56.

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least one slave woman to help her labor. Within three years she would have a small family of slaves. But it would be nearly a dozen years before she had a home to call her own. Because Perrine (like most French females of her era) was not literate, her fatherless children also grew up untutored, as shown by the records below:

18 June 1734

Natchitoches baptism

Marie Anne, small negro girl belonging to *Widow la Renaudière*, habitant. Godparents: *Charles La Renaudière* (marked with an “x”) and Marie Anne Rousseau (x).¹⁷

6 January 1737

Natchitoches baptism

François, small negro boy belonging to *Mde. La Renaudière*. Godparents; François Chaniau (x) and Marie Françoise La Renaudière (x).¹⁸

26 December 1737

Natchitoches baptisms

Remy dit Joli Coeur, negro man belonging to *Mde. de la Renaudière*. Godparents: Remy Poissot (s) and Angélique Charles (x) . . . and . . . Angélique, negro woman, belonging to *Mde. de la Renaudière*. Godparents: [illegible] and Martine Bonnet (x).¹⁹

26 December 1737

Natchitoches marriage

Remy and Angélique, negroes of *Dame La Renaudière*. Witnesses: their godparents.²⁰

1740

Natchitoches notarial record

Perine Pivert and Robert Avarre, Exchange of Slaves,

17. Registers of St. François des Natchitoches, for which translated abstracts are available as Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803: Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers of the French and Spanish Post of St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977). For this baptism, see entry 15.

18. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, 9, no. 52.

19. *Ibid.*, 13, nos. 93–94.

20. *Ibid.*, 21, no. 164.

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dependancies; [St. Roch] further cedes and conveys a black horse, two oxen and a cow, the whole free of mortgage, coming from the [sale] made to [Pinguenet] on 8th of November 1728, of the goods belonging to Mess. de Boisbriant and Delaloere . . . on the condition that *Renault, Junior*, shall pay the price of the adjudication under the conditions set forth in the process verbal” of the sale. Renault, Senior, would stand as surety for the debt. Passed at Fort de Chartres. Signed: “R. Pinguenet; *Renault senior*; DeRoussilliet wit.; Becquet wit.; Place,¹Not[ary].”¹⁶

Another land sale of that spring, for a neighboring tract, adds detail on the site, which surely stood in the village of St. Philippe:

18 April 1729

Fort de Chartres sale

Jean Baptiste Place to *Renault*, sale of two arpents in front situate between the land of Hubert Finet and adjoining on the other side to *Renault*, bounding on one end to the hills, and on the other to the coulee, the whole situate in the prairie of the Establishment, on which [Sieur Place] reserve[s] the house built upon it, and the lot of twenty toises in front and two arpents in length running toward the coulee.” Price: 3,500 pounds of flour, 500 pounds of bacon; 18 hams.¹⁷

In 1732, after the dissolution of the Company of the Indies, a new census was taken of the post of Illinois. Its structure clearly equates Renault’s concession with the village of St. Philippe and attest its economic progress:¹⁸

Four Southern Illinois communities are enumerated: Kaskaskia, Cahokia Mission, Fort de Chartres, and “Concession of Renault, North of Fort de Chartres.” The latter settlement, which by elimination has to be St. Philippe, is described as follows:

16. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 371–72, K-38.

17. *Ibid.*, 373–74, doc. K-41.

18. Belting, *Kaskaskia*, 38, citing Colonies G¹:464, Archives Nationales.

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Bundle 1732–1750, document 40. [Actual document is missing.]²¹

Perrine’s reason for swapping slaves with Robert Avarre remains unknown, as do the identities of the slaves she acquired. What is known is that her new acquisition did not continue to increase; no further slaves attached to her household were baptized, married, or buried. The evidence suggests that Perrine was in debt and downsizing; the second set of slaves was sold within a year:

1741
Natchitoches notarial record:
Perrine Piedvert et al to Gabriel Buard. Sale of slaves. Bundle 1732–1750, document 51. [Actual document is missing.]²²

The last record of Perrine, ironically, is the one in which she at last acquired her own home:

1745
Natchitoches notarial record
Perrine Piver, Vve. [Widow] Renediere, of Pierre Rachal. Purchase of land. Bundle 1732–1750, document 80. [Actual document is missing.]²³

(Marie Françoise)

In her decade at Natchitoches, Perrine married off two daughters, both as young teens. The first daughter, in fact, was already a widow when she first surfaced in the Natchitoches registers as a sixteen-year-old bride. No record of her first marriage has been found in any extant post or church register in Louisiana or Canada. Nor has there been found a record of military service or death for the soldier identified below as her first spouse:

19 March 1739
Natchitoches marriage
“After 3 bans. Marriage of George Avenal (x) soldier

21. Index to French Archives, Clerk of Court, Natchitoches.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

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Men:	[not given]*
Women	[not given]*
Legitimate children	17
Bastard children	[not given]
Orphans or bastards	[not given]
Arpents cultivated	250
Land in value	471
Negroes, <i>pièce d'Inde</i> [i.e., prime]	15
Negresses	3
Negro children	5
Male Indian slaves	1
Female Indian slaves	1
Oxen	28
Cows	42
Pigs	163
Horses	25
Mills	2
Houses	9
Barns	7
Stables	5

*The census totals for Illinois reveal that only 159 white men and 39 white women resided in *all* four settlements combined.

Notarial documents of 1733 reflect other services Renaultt performed for the fledgling settlements of Illinois—functions common to engineers and metallurgists of his era: surveyor and mill-site appraiser:

17 May 1732 [1733]
Fort de Chartres affidavit
“Renaultt” certifies that he was “called upon by the Council of Illinois, several years since, for the survey of a tract of land conceded by the Royal Company of India to Messrs. Chassin and Delisle.” [The year should be 1733. See 18 May and 11 June 1733 documents, below.]¹⁹

18 May 1733
Fort de Chartres affidavit
The Clerk of Court further treats the Chassin-Delisle

19. Ibid., 390–91, doc. K-62.

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in the company of Mr. Macarty, who gives his permission, son of George Avenal and Catherine Fasecoche of the kingdom of 'Hongrie'. . . and . . . *Marie Françoise la Renaudière (x)*, widow of deceased Pierre Benoist, soldier, legitimate daughter of *deceased* Philippe la Renaudière and Perrine Piver. Witnesses: de Corbier (s), René du Bos, and Alorge (s)."²⁴

Marie Françoise quickly bore two children at Natchitoches, before she and her second husband dropped from the records of all the colonial posts. Perrine served as godmother to these first two of her grandchildren.

3 August 1741
Natchitoches baptism
Perine Avenal, "legitimate daughter of Georges Avenal, soldier, and *Marie François[e] la Regnatiere*. Godparents: *Charles La Regnaudiere (x)* and *Perine La Regnaudiere (x)*."²⁵

26 June 1744
Natchitoches baptism
"Jean Baptiste Charles, born 24 June, legitimate son of George Avenal and *Marie Françoise Larnodier*, habitants. Godparents: Charles *Larnodier* and Elisabeth Rachal."²⁶

Considering that Avenal was a soldier, he may have returned to Europe at the end of his service, taking Marie Françoise with him.

(Agnes Geneviève)

The second La Renaudière daughter—the one for whom no baptismal record has been found—could have been only twelve to fourteen at her first marriage. The record of this union also provides the only known reference to the origins of Philippe and Perrine:

24. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, 23, no. 174.
25. *Ibid.*, 26, no. 200, leaves blank the name of the godmother as unreadable; closer scrutiny convinces me it is *Perrine*.
26. *Ibid.*, 31, no. 246.

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land matter and refers to the affidavit made by "*Mr. Renaud*" the day before.²⁰

11 June 1733
Fort de Chartres affidavit
Mr. Delessart, Antoine Bienvenu and Charles Gossiaux, partners, agree to build a mill on the property previously discussed on 17–18 May 1733. Mr. de St. Ange, Commandant of Illinois is to "prevail upon *Mr. Renault, exercising the functions of engineer in Illinois*, to help them with good advice." Affidavit of *Philippe Renault*, same day, certifies that he examined the property, found the stream sufficient for a mill, and surveyed it.²¹

The year 1733 was also the last one that Renault seems to have been active in St. Philippe affairs. The following three documents were his last of record there for seven years:

2 July 1733
Fort de Chartres sale
Jean Baptiste Beauvais and Louise Lacroix his wife had previously sold land in the prairie of Fort St. Philippe, to one Gueuremont, who sold to Louis Poisson (var. Poisset), whose heirs now seek a new title for their 3 arpents of land that run from the Mississippi to the hills, bounded on one side by *Mr. Renault*.²²

2 September 1733
Fort de Chartres sale
Germain Boule and wife Jeanne Maturel to Louis Robbillard, acting for Charles Rogue, sale of land in village of St. Philippe, "with the charges conforming to the contact of donation made by *Mr. Renault*."²³

3 December 1733
Fort de Chartres sale

20. *Ibid.*, 396–97, doc. K-69.
21. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 397–98, doc. K-70.
22. *Ibid.*, 399–400, doc. K-72.
23. *Ibid.*, 402–04, doc. K-75.

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15? May [poor legibility] 1740²⁷
Natchitoches marriage

Two bans and dispensation from the third. Marriage “of Guillaume Bergereau *dit* St. Onge, native of Jeannai in St. Onge, Parish of Sulpice, son of Nicolas Bergereau, native of Jeannai, and Jeanne Vigere of Saintaur, parish of St. Brie of the same province . . . and . . . *Agnes Regnaudiere*, native of Illinois, post of Kascatia, daughter of *Philippe Regnaudiere*, native of Perigord, and *Perine Pivert*, native of Vitré in Bretagne. Witnesses: Etienne Chaniot, Jean Lage (x), Remi Poisot, Pierre Bernardin. [Illegible signatures.]”

By 1744, Agnes and her husband had relocated downriver at the post of Pointe Coupée, where their family would remain for decades. After Bergeron’s burial on 6 September 1762, Agnes married yet another Pointe Coupée soldier-settler, Hiacinte Ferret. The church record of that marriage tells nothing more of her parentage or origins.²⁸ The civil marriage contract states only that she was “widow of the deceased Guillaume Bergeron called Saintonge, when living a resident of False River” (a district within the jurisdiction of the Pointe Coupée post). The contract also states that, in lieu of parents, she was represented by “Sieur Louis Arnaud Ducret and Baptiste Carmouche, her friends and friends of her deceased parents.”²⁹ No connection has been found thus far between these men and Agnes’s parents.

27. *Ibid.*, 27, no. 206, gives the date as “[not given] 17, 1740.” A closer study of the blurred record suggests the date is 16 May.

28. *Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholic Church Records*, vol. 1 1707–1769 (Baton Rouge, The Diocese, 1978), 144, citing Pointe Coupée Parish register 1:54 and 2: pt. 1, 35. Agnes also appears in these Pointe Coupée records as *Geneviève*, wife of Bergeron.

29. Alice Daly Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriage Contracts*, vol. 2, 1728–1769 (New Orleans: Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans, 1989), 63.

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Louis Robilliard and wife Madelaine Cordier to Guillaume Kerquerum. Witnessed by “*Renaut*.”²⁴

The September document, with its reference to land that Renault had previously conveyed by “donation,” does not refer to a charitable act on his part. As subsequent documents make clearer, in his capacity as director of the concession at St. Philippe, one of his obligations was to dispense plots to settlers—a duty that he seems to have performed somewhat haphazardly, judging by the titles that had to be tidied retrospectively.

Renault’s continued presence in the colony, at least until 1740, is implied by the following trio of notarial acts:

22 August 1734

New Orleans slave sale.

Nicolas Henry, Court Clerk, sells a negro boy named Pierre to *Sieur Philippe Renaud, Junior*, whose father accepts for him. Terms, 500 francs Tournois, paid cash.²⁵

18 May 1740

Fort de Chartres sale

Louis Robilliard of Kaskaskia, acting for self and wife Madelaine Cordier, sell to Jean Baptiste Becquet, a lot in Fort de Chartres, bounded by Pierre Benetto *dit* Duchemin. Witness: *Philippe Renault*.²⁶

4 December 1740

Fort de Chartres sale

“*Renaut*” (signed *Renault*) acknowledges that he sells and presently delivers to Nicolas Prevot “a lot of ground belonging to *my son, for whom I am acting*; which lot measuring about one arpent and three-fourths, more or less, bounded by defunct Bosset, by the main street, by the street of the Grand Marais, and

24. *Ibid.*, 407–08, doc. K-78-A.

25. “Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 5 (April 1922): 257.

26. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 465–66, doc. K-120.

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(Philippe)

One record created by Agnes brings into the family fold a likely brother:

4 November 1744
Pointe Coupée baptism
“Marie Elisabeth Berjeron (Guillaume, native of the parish of St. Sulpice & Agnes Renadier) bn. not given, bt. 4 Nov. 1744, spo[nsor] *Philippe Renadier* and Marie Therese Chalin.³⁰”

As previously noted, the Natchitoches records of the 1730s repeatedly identify Perrine as a widow. Thus, the above Philippe cannot be her husband; and no other record of a Philippe Renadier or La Renaudière has been found in the colonies.

As previously shown, the births of Charles and Marie Françoise in 1721 and 1723 should have been followed by a child in 1725. None was baptized and none was tallied on the 1 January 1726 census. Philippe Sr.’s absence during the latter half of 1724 (and possibly until mid-1725) disrupted the natural pattern of childspacing. His return home by summer 1725 suggests the birth of another child in early-to-mid 1726—presumably Agnes who married in 1740. Since Philippe’s death did not occur until after the summer of 1728, Perrine should have produced at least one more child.

The appearance of another Philippe in 1744, as godfather to Agnes’s daughter, suggests that he may have been that last child born to Philippe and Perrine. No further trace of this Philippe has been found in the colony.

(Charles)

The first child born to Philippe and Perrine—Charles—was the last known child to marry. He was also the progenitor of all Louisianians who carried on the family

30. *Diocese of Baton Rouge*, 1:170

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by the high street . . . with its buildings, with the reserve of a beer kettle, and a distiller’s pot, which belong to my son . . . on condition that he [the buyer] shall give back two iron bars which support the furnace of the brewery, that he shall haul at his own expense all the barrels which are in said brewery and one of Banbara’s, negro of the concession [i.e., one of the negroes of the concession that are from the Banbara nation in Africa]. . . . *Renault* [requires him to bring back] all the doors and windows which have been taken away” without Renault’s knowledge. Price: 225 livres “in good current bills or in flour good and fair, as it is received in the King’s storehouse.”²⁷

Renault’s son—a brewer and distiller—appears to have left the colony. The following document of 22 April 1743 implies that the elder Renault was himself recalled to France scarcely two years later.

22 April 1743
Fort de Chartres letter
To Mr. Delaloere Flancour, principal clerk of the Marine and judge in Illinois, from Nicolas Noise of St. Philippe. Because Delaloere’s position gave him “charge of the inspection of the mines of St. Philippe,” and authority to “regulate the affairs of that concession, he requests that Delaloere grant him an official title to the land that *Mr. Renault, formerly director of said concession*, had “long before granted” Noise. Describing it as a small parcel of land situated beyond “the last land conceded to Pierre and Louis Buteau to the woods,” Noise said that Renault had often promised “to have a regular title issued [but] several impediments, and at last his recall, have not allowed him to keep his word; and now after a long residence and much work [Noise has] no security as to [his] property.” Lelaloere responded the same day, officially granting “the land and lot that *Mr. Renault* has conceded verbally, in the village of St. Philippe.”²⁸

27. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 472–73, doc. K-126.

28. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 496–97, doc. K-146.

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name. No trace of a wife or children is found for him until, at the age of 26, he presented a child at the font of the Natchitoches church in November 1747.³¹ On 1 February 1751, he was discharged from regular military service in Louisiana.³² The 1766 census credits him with a wife, 2 boys, 3 girls, no slaves, 3 firearms, 6 horned cattle, 3 horses, 10 hogs, no sheep, 600 twists of tobacco, 25 measures of unshelled corn, and 2 measures of beans. He obviously lived within the post of Natchitoches, as his neighbors were the blacksmith Jacques Naigle (his son-in-law) and the merchant Étienne Pavie.³³ At some point between 26 September 1773 and 19 March 1774, Charles died at the Natchitoches post, leaving a large family, little estate, and a widow (Maria Juana del Rio, apparently from the nearby Spanish post of Los Adayes), who soon remarried on that date in 1774.³⁴

Although the Natchitoches La Renaudières were reduced in both rank and fortune over the next several generations, vestiges of their origins amid the colony's earliest officials and employees are evident at Natchitoches. Particularly so, in the identities of those who served Charles as godparents to his children: Louis, Marie, and Des Neiges de St. Denis, adult children of the post founder, Chevalier Louis Juchereau de St. Denis; Commandant Caesar deBlanc; the chevalier de la Ronde; the notary Guillaume Chever; and Louise Derbanne, daughter of the post's first subdélégué.³⁵

The wilderness frontier that Louisiana was throughout all this period was a land that enriched some men and impoverished others. Especially outside the capital city, noble

31. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, 36, no. 286.

32. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2:201.

33. 27 January 1766 French Census of Natchitoches, Misc. Collection 3, Northwestern State University Archives, Natchitoches.

34. Docs. 841, 874, and 1255, French Archives, Natchitoches; Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, 126, no. 1015.

35. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, nos. 286, 316, 525, 615, 706.

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A date for Renault's recall to France is provided by Giraud, who reports that "S[ieur] Renaud" deposited in the Council's registry on 18 July 1743 a statement of his activities in Illinois.²⁹

Subsequent documents for Renault in Illinois are mere references to the property he once occupied there. None suggest that, before or after his departure, he sold any land at the post—aside from the one tract that he had actually purchased for his son. Together with the foregoing reference to Renault as the *director* of the concession at St. Philippe, rather than its *owner*, the question remains as to whether Renault was ever the actual owner of the mine site or whether he merely managed it for the Company.

2 February 1756

New Chartres sale

Jean Pierre Girardot, officer, residing in Kaskaskia, for himself and his brother Pierre Girardo, heirs of deceased Mr. Girardot, sell a parcel of land in village of St. Philippe, which had been conceded by Mr. *Philippe Renault, director for the company for the discovery of mines*, believed to exist in this country."³⁰

21 March 1758

New Chartres sale

Bailiff for New Chartres announces before the door of the parish church that he has been ordered to sell a lot and mill, bounded on one side by Baptiste Mercier, on another by "the street between the church and St. Pierre, and on another by "the street of Mr. Renaud."³¹

24 November 1756

New Chartres sale

Pierre Lupien dit Baron to Jaques Hennet dit Sans

29. Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5: 442.

30. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 605–07, doc. K-214.

31. Brown and Dean, *Village of Chartres*, 656–57, doc. K-247

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families frequently lost their lustre, while the offspring of peasants became plantation lords.

As for the origins of Philippe’s family’s in France, nothing yet is known. Colonial resources suggest only that Philippe was sufficiently educated to hold a clerkship, somewhat knowledgeable about metallurgy and surveying, and sufficiently well-connected to be dispatched to the colony by the Company of the Indies as its first mining commissioner.

The particle *de* that prefaced his surname, *if used properly*, would suggest noble origins for the family at some past point; but the *de* was too frequently misused to be accorded much weight in and of itself. The inclusion of *de* in his name could have been an affectation on Philippe’s part, an erroneous assumption by others, or a significant clue to his past. Perhaps that uncertainty will be settled as research on this family now shifts to Perigord in France.

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Chagrin. Sale of house and lot [a billiard hall] in village of New Chartres, bounded in front by Ste. Anne Street, in the rear by the King’s road, and on one side by “a cross street opposite *Renault*.”³²

Philippe Renault was clearly the victor in the contest for hegemony over Illinois mines under the Company of the Indies. Yet, in retrospect, he was but a blip in the course of Louisiana history. He was a man of ideas, a man of drive, a man who achieved the post he wanted—and lived ostentatiously—but failed to find the riches he sought. As the likelihood of productive mines grew slimmer, the colonial government lost interest in financing Renault’s endeavors. He and the one son who followed him saw no further opportunity in the colony and abandoned it. Neither left lasting marks. Neither left offspring—at least not any that were acknowledged.

32. *Ibid.*, 617–18, doc. K-222.