



ELIZABETH SHOWN MILLS

Certified GenealogistSM • Certified Genealogical LecturerSM
Fellow & Past President, American Society of Genealogists
Trustee & Past President, Board for Certification of Genealogists

1732 Ridgedale Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35406-1942 • eshown@comcast.net

- DATE:** 5 April 2005
- SUBJECT:** Maternal Ancestry of Marie Hyacinthe Gagné,
Wife of James (a.k.a. Jacques & Jacob) Wallace
- REPORT TO** Jim Byram <jim.byram@rcn.com>
- BACKGROUND:** Marie Hyacinthe Gagné, a resident of the Caddochoche Indian dependency of the Spanish Louisiana outpost of Natchitoches, is easily found as an adult in my published translations of extant records from the Catholic parish of Natchitoches, dating 1729–1850. From those published records, Mr. Byram has determined the following:
- WALLACE-GAGNÉ MARRIAGE:
16 November 1795
Marie Hyacinthe is “daughter of Etienne Ganié and Marie Louise Bertrand” [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), entry 3410]
- GAGNÉ-BERTRAND MARRIAGE:
27 October 1766
Marie Louise is “native of this parish, legitimate daughter of Claude Bertrand, elder sergeant of the troops, and Marie Elizabeth de Lisle” [Ibid., entry 989]
- PROBLEM:** Although Marie Louise (Bertrand) Gagné is said to be a native of Natchitoches Parish and the offspring of a legitimate marriage, no baptism appears in the church records for a child identified as “Marie Louise Bertrand” and no marriage record appears there for the stated parents.
- OBJECTIVE:** Confirm the identity of Marie Louise's parents and provide a fuller identity for each of them.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Claude Pierre Bertrand *dite* Dauphine, born at Grenoble about 1703, arrived in the Louisiana colony as a seventeen-year-old soldier aboard the *Marie* in 1720. By 1 January 1726 he had been dispatched to the Louisiana-Texas frontier outpost of Natchitoches. According to the census taken that day, the post consisted of 23 free white married couples and their children, 18 single white males, 0 single white females, 6 white domestics (ostensibly male adults), 3 Indian slaves, and 32 Negro slaves.

The gender imbalance in the Natchitoches population, which lasted throughout most of the colonial era, impacted the area's social structure and the Bertrand-Gagné family. Much of the white male population formed alliances with Native American women. In most cases, the female was first purchased as a slave from her tribe, from another French settler, or from the Spanish-Texas settlements nearby. As affectionate bonds developed, the woman and her children were typically freed. Occasionally, the French male married the Indian woman within the church and their children were legitimized. The offspring of both types of French-Indian alliances—marriages and concubinages—typically married into the white population. (For an intensive analysis of this society, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Family and Social Patterns of the Colonial Louisiana Frontier: A Quantitative Analysis, 1714–1803" [Thesis, University of Alabama New College, 1981], 231 pp.)

Bertrand *dit* Dauphin would remain at Natchitoches for three decades and would serve as sergeant of the reserve troops for several years prior to his death on 28 October 1756. He rarely participated in the civil records of the post, but frequently appears in the church records as a godparent or a witness to marriages of others. His only known alliance was with a Native American woman whom he and his partner manumitted in 1755—a woman known only by her French name, Jeanne Elisabeth "Lisette" de l'Isle. Her tribe is not specifically identified in any known record. However, with most other Indian females in her situation at Natchitoches, the appellation attached to her Christian name (in this case "from the Isle") usually pointed to a geographic origin; her contemporary Jeanne de la Grande Terre, for example, was from "la Grande Terre" in South Louisiana—the region occupied by the Chitimachas Tribe. In Lisette's case, the Isle may well have referred to one of the several isles formed by Red River in the region settled by the Natchitoches tribe.

Bertrand's manumission of his mistress and their children, unlike most of its counterparts, was not recorded at the time it occurred. Nor did he subsequently marry Lisette. Because he died without legal heirs, his estate ordinarily would have been considered 'vacant' and would have escheated to the colony. In that case, the post commandant was to auction the property and transmit the proceeds and supporting papers to the Superior Council at New Orleans. However, Bertrand's property was held in common by a partner, Pierre Haraud (Harreau, etc.). Commandant César de Blanc apparently forestalled the auction, left all goods with Haraud, and submitted only an accounting to the Superior Council—amid which was a copy of the 1755 manumission of Lisette and her children. A 1756 copy of the Superior Council copy, created for Lisette, was found among her belongings after her death in 1768 and was filed for recording at Natchitoches by her son-in-law Etienne Gagné, to ensure the continued freedom of his own wife and children.

RESEARCH NOTES

10 June 1720

Chef de Baye, France

"List of Persons for the Law Concession Embarked on the *Marie*, Commanded by M. De Pontlo, bound for Louisiana from the roadstead of Chef de Baye."

Soldiers:

"Bertrand, Claude [from] Grenoble age 17"

SOURCE:

Glenn R. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1970), 1:90.

COMMENT BY ESM:

No other passenger, worker, or soldier on board was said to be from Grenoble.

1 January 1726

Census of Natchitoches

Dauphine and Accaux, Associates

2 masters

0 hired hands or domestics

0 Negro or Indian slaves

0 horned cattle

0 horses

4 arpents cleared land

SOURCE:

Colonies, G1, 464:17-18, Archives Nationales, Paris. For a published translation, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials: Censuses, Military Rolls, and Tax Lists, 1722–1803* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1981), 5.

8 August 1750

Marie Louise [no last name]

“Baptism of Marie Louise, born of an Indian belonging to Mr. [Bertrand *dit*] Dauphine. Godparents: Pierre Alorge (s), sergeant, and Marie Françoise Bourdon (x).”

SOURCE:

Mills, *Natchitoches . . . 1729–1803*, no. 324.

COMMENT BY ESM:

This child is Marie Louise Bertrand, subsequent wife of Etienne Gagné, as evidenced by the notarial documents abstracted in this report.

14 July 1752

Claude [no last name]

“Baptism of Claude, son of an Indian of Mr. Dauphine, sergeant. Godparents: Mr. de la Ronde (s) [i.e., Chevalier Pierre de la Ronde] and Jeanne Alorge (s).”

SOURCE:

Mills, *Natchitoches . . . 1729–1803*, no. 540.

COMMENT BY ESM:

This Claude is the child called Pierre in the 1755 manumission and subsequent documents.

7 August 1754

Jean Louis [no last name]

“Baptism of Jean Louis, born of an Indian belonging to Mr. Dauphine, sergeant. Godparents: Jean Prudhomme (x) and Jeanne Rachal (s).”

SOURCE:

Mills, *Natchitoches . . . 1729–1803*, no. 583.

COMMENT BY ESM:

The godfather Jean [Baptiste] Prudhomme was the stepson of Pierre Alorge and half-sister of Jeanne Alorge, who had served as godparents to the first two Dauphine children. Jeanne Rachal was the daughter of Pierre, Dauphine's neighbor of 1726.

15 [illegible month] 1755

Manumission of Jeanne and children

Claude Bertrand, sergeant, and Pierre Harreau, corporal, emancipate Jeanne and her children named Marie Louise, Pierre, and Jean Louis, before Cesar DeBlanc, Commandant. Copy dated 20 [illegible month] 1756, made from files of the Superior Council at New Orleans. Filed at Natchitoches November 1770.

SOURCE:

Document 478, Colonial Archives, Office of the Clerk of Court, Natchitoches.

COMMENT BY ESM:

This document is one of a series of four filed by Etienne Gagné in November 1770, in the settlement of his mother-in-law's succession. In the notarial archives of Natchitoches, the four are numbered 477, 478, 479, and 480.

28 October 1756

Burial of "Claude Bertrand *dit* Daufin, a native of Grenoble, parish of St. Laurent."

SOURCE:

Mills, *Natchitoches* . . . 1729–1803, no. 797

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January 1762

Donation: Pierre Haraud to Louise, Pierre, and Louis

Louis Mathias LeCourt de Prelle, officer of the militia, acknowledges (in 1774) having received 3,000 livres in January 1762 from Pierre Haraud for the benefit of Louise, Pierre, and Louis, all three children of an Indian woman belonging to Haraud. 2 pp. French. Will not photocopy well.

SOURCE:

Document 479, Colonial Archives, Natchitoches.

COMMENT BY ESM:

This 3,000 livres would amount to 1,000 livres each. That sum would be diminished by any amount that LeCourt, as financial guardian, would have expended on raising the children to the point that they could support themselves. Note the assertion just three years later, in Marie Louise's marriage contract, that LeCourt was due to pay her 575 livres in 1769, at which time she would have attained her legal majority. However, that marriage contract also asserts that she (age 15) has another 1,425 in Spanish gold that was also attributed to the succession of her father and his partner Haraud.

2 October 1765

Louis Antoine de la Perriere

“Baptism of Louis Antoine, born September 29, 1765, son of Louise [Bertrand dite] Dauphine and natural son of Messire Louis George Monjonan de la Perriere, esquire and chevalier of St. Louis, captain and commandant of the post of Natchitoches. Godparents: Antoine Fazinde (s), Clemence Borme (s); s/ La Perriere.”

SOURCE:

Mills, *Natchitoches* . . . 1729–1803, no. 845.

COMMENT BY ESM:

Commandant de la Perrière is a bachelor, who has been at the post for only a year or so.

27 January 1766

1766 French Census of Natchitoches

Monsieur de la Perrier, Commandant

- 0 Married Men & Widowers
- 0 Married Women
- 0 Boys
- 0 Girls
- 3 Free Male Halfbreeds
- 3 Free Female Halfbreeds
- 1 Free Female Indians
- 0 Free Male Mulattoes

SOURCE:

Miscellaneous Collection 3, Northwestern State University Archives, Natchitoches; photostat from an uncited original held by Archivo General de la Nación. For a published translation, see Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*, 9–14.

COMMENT BY ESM:

An analysis of the entire census, compared to the known population of the post, suggests that Jeanne Elisabeth “Lisette” and her children are the other occupants of Commandant de la Perrier’s household.

In addition to Lisette, who would be the full-blood Indian female and was likely his hired domestic, the six multiracial boys and girls would be

- Lisette’s three children by Bertrand: Marie Louise, Claude Pierre, and Jean Louis;
- Lisette’s children by an unknown father (see Doc. 479 below): Marie Ursule, Marie Emere, and Marie Marguerite.

Missing is Marie Louise’s son, Louis Antoine de la Perrière, who—at just one-quarter Indian—would be considered white in this society, especially since he was the acknowledged child of the commandant.

As shown below, by May 1766, Lisette and her children have left de la Perrière’s home and have their own dwelling—though it was not one they owned.

6 May 1766

1766 Spanish Census of Natchitoches

Monsieur de la Perrier, Commandant, 1 slave, no other data.

[51 households away:]

Luisetta, free Indian

- 3 Men bearing arms
- 6 Women
- 0 Older Boys [over puberty]
- 0 Older Girls [over puberty, but not married or a mother]
- 3 Boys [under puberty]
- 3 Girls [under puberty]
- 3 Slaves
- 0 Land
- 0 Horses
- 0 Cattle
- 2 Hogs and Sheep
- 1 Gun

SOURCE:

Legajo 2585, Papeles de Santo Domingo, Archivo General de Indias, Seville; microfilm copy in Colonial Records Collection, Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette. For a published translation, see Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*, 9–14.

COMMENT BY ESM:

Three months later, Etienne Gagné (in the presence of his cousin Pierre) would enter into a marriage contract with Lisette's daughter Marie Louise. Neither of the Gagné males are enumerated in the 1766 censuses. Unmarried males at this post typically boarded in families or with widows, but the Gagnés cannot be accounted for in any other household. Apparently, they are boarding with Lisette above.

5 August 1766

Gagné–Bertrand Marriage Contract

Etienne Gagnys, joiner, son of Jean Baptiste Gagnys and Agatha Crevier, native of “la cathedrale de la haute ville” in Canada, to Marie Louise Bertrand, daughter of Claude Bertrand, deceased, and Marie Elisabeth de l’Isle. Acting for the groom *in loco parentis* is Pierre Gagné, his cousin, and Jean Pierre Villard. Acting for the bride is Commandant Louis George de la Perrière. The groom brings no property into the marriage. The bride is said to have 2,000 silver livres coming to her from the succession of “Pierre [sic] Bertrand, her father and Pierre Haraud, his associate.” More specifically, that sum is said to consist of 1,425 livres in Spanish gold (in hand) and 575 livres due by note of Mr. Le Court de Presle, militia officer, payable in January 1769. Bride’s mother X’d the document. French, 2 pp. Should photocopy well.

SOURCE:

Document 429, Colonial Archives, Natchitoches.

COMMENT BY ESM:

The circumstances surrounding this marriage contract are highly unusual, questionable, and suggestive. Consider the following:

- Marriage contracts in this society regularly named children born to one of the spouses prior to

the date of this marriage. There is no mention of Marie Louise's son by Commandant de la Perrière. Nor is there a record of his burial as an infant.

- Bertrand's children could not inherit from him under colonial Louisiana law, because he did not legitimate them. His surviving partner, dying in 1762, left a donation of 3,000 livres to Bertrand's three children—i.e., 1,000 each, *minus* whatever sum would be expended on their support prior to the time they reached their majority and received their inheritance. The 575 livres due by LeCourt in 1769 would be an appropriate balance.
- The 1766 censuses show Marie Louise's family to be impoverished and propertyless. Had she, indeed, had 1,425 livres in Spanish gold, her guardian would have had at least some of it invested in a home and cattle (the latter being a major source of wealth on this frontier).
- The marriage contract was signed in August, but the marriage did not occur until October—a delay unparalleled by any other couple in this society. Amid my 1981 analysis of colonial marriage contracts and church unions, in “Family and Social Patterns . . . 1714–1803,” I observed (pp. 127–28):

“The longest period [found at this post] between contract and marriage possibly resulted from second thoughts on the part of the male; at least the unusual circumstances of the marriage suggest this possibility. On 29 September 1765, a son was born to young Marie Louise Bertrand, the barely fifteen-year-old daughter of the late sergeant, Claude Bertrand, by his Indian slave-concubine, Lisette de l'Isle. [Before] Bertrand's death, Lisette and the Bertrand children had been manumitted, [after which] the post commandant, Chevalier Louis George Monjonan de la Perriere, apparently employed Lisette as a domestic. When young Marie Louise's child was baptized in 1765, three days after its birth, Perriere appeared at the ceremony and declared himself the father. Godparents were his friends, both prominent members of the community. On the following 5 August 1766, Marie Louise appeared before the post notary to file a contract of marriage with a Canadian newcomer, Etienne Gagné—at which time Perriere accompanied her to give his consent, *in loco parentis*, to the marriage. The actual wedding was slow to materialize. When it finally took place, on 27 October 1766, Perriere again appeared as official witness. Obviously the marriage had his sponsorship, and some advantages should have accrued to the new bridegroom in accommodating the post commandant; but some reticence did seem to exist on either his part or that of the bride. No other couple at the post came anywhere near matching Gagné's record for delay between contract and marriage.”

All things considered, the young bride's Spanish gold may well have come from the commandant who fathered her son. De la Perrière was the first white male at the outpost to acknowledge paternity of an illegitimate child—and theirs was a society that did not tolerate concubinages between white males and a legally marriageable female. Finding Marie Louise a husband would have absolved de la Perrière of the community obligation to marry her. (As a comparison: his friend Le Court de Presle (also minor nobility), represented the only other contemporaneous incidence of concubinage with a marriageable woman and eventually yielded to community pressure to marry her.)

One final factor to be considered is the missing child the commandant fathered by Marie Louise—one he cared enough about to publicly acknowledge. Did he, perhaps, follow a custom practiced by his some men of his class in France itself: i.e., take “his” child from the lower-caste mother to be “suitably raised” in a “more appropriate environment”—with compensation to that mother?

Regarding the identity of “Elizabeth de l'Isle”

This marriage contract and the corresponding church marriage—both occasions at which Commandant de la Perrière was the principal figure—are the only instances in which this Indian mother is given a formal name. Otherwise, she is simply “Lisette,” Jeanne, or “an Indian

woman.” Other parallel examples exist at Natchitoches, when prominent “mentors” would appear at a marriage or baptism and use the record to “upgrade” a protégée’s status—even to the point of changing their racial identity. De la Perrière did not go quite that far in this document, although he obscured the ethnicity with the name he gave to Lisette.

[illegible day] October 1768

Etienne Gagnier of Pierre Baillio

Acquisition of house and land in exchange for Gagnier’s building a new home for Baillio. 1 p. French. Will not photocopy well.

SOURCE:

Document 477, Colonial Archives, Natchitoches.

28 September 1768

Succession of Jeanne

Inventory and appraisalment of the estate left by Jeanne, a free Indian formerly belonging to deceased Claude Bertrand, sergeant, and Pierre Haraud, corporal. Jeanne died leaving the following heirs:

Pierre, aged about 15

Louis, aged about 13

Marie Ursule, aged about 10

Marie Emere, aged about 8

Marie Marguerite, aged about 6

and one daughter “married to Etienne Gagnier, named Marie Louise”

SOURCE:

Document 480, Colonial Archives, Natchitoches.

COMMENT BY ESM:

The daughter Ursulle migrated to New Orleans where she married Josef [?] Modena" in October 1786. The published abstract of that record identifies the bride as "Ursula Dauphine, native of Natchitoches, daughter of Beltran Dauphine and of Juana Dauphine.” See Alice Daly Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriages: A Collection of Marriage Records from the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, . . . 1784–1806* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), 19.

Marie Ursulle's age, as given in the 1768 document, suggests that she was born in 1758, while Bertrand's burial places his death some two years before that. If she were conceived shortly before his October 1756 death, then she would have been born no later than July 1757. In that case, she would have been aged 11 in September 1768, rather than 10. This one-year discrepancy was not uncommon in their society--and is one reason why stated ages were often qualified with that word "about." Theirs was a society in which individuals celebrated their "saint's day" rather than their "birthday" and one in which people who were not literate did not keep Bible records in which they recorded births, marriages, and deaths.

15 November 1770

Succession of Lisette

Sieur Etienne Gagnier (x), “relative of deceased Lisette, a free savagess,” files his account, showing a value

of 539 livres. Witnesses: Prudhomme, Bormé, Rougot, Dellissart Jouannis. 1 p. French. Should photocopy well.

SOURCE:

Document 479, Colonial Archives, Natchitoches.

COMMENT BY ESM:

The succession documents for Jeanne *dit* Lisette were part of a series of 4 documents that Gagné apparently filed together, given that they carry consecutive entry numbers but vary widely in their dates:

477: His agreement with Baillio, 1768

478: Emancipation of "Jeanne" and her children Marie Louise, Pierre, and Jean Louis, 1755–56

479: Settlement of the succession "Lisette," 1770

480: Inventory of the succession of "Jeanne," 1768

FURTHER RESEARCH

The following documents from the Colonial Archives series at Natchitoches offer additional material on the family:

- Doc. 483 Marie Louise Bertrand, wife of Étienne Gagné, to Commandant. Petition relative to estate of her deceased mother. 1 p. French. Should copy well.
- Doc. 576 Étienne Gagnier acknowledges receiving from Mons. LeCourt the remains of the donation that Pierre Haraud, corporal, made to the three infants Louise, Pierre, and Louis.
- Doc. 741 Étienne Gagné to Pierre Baillio. Sale of house and lot on left bank of river. 1772. Spanish. 4 pp. Should copy well.
- Doc. 1320 Pierre Bertrand acknowledges receiving from Marie Louise Bertrand (Mme. Étienne Gagné) his share of the succession of Claude Bertrand, sergeant, and Haraut, corporal. 1 p. French. Should copy o.k.
- Doc. 1529 Mrs. Étienne Gagné to Guillaume Barberoux. Sale of land, 1781. Listed in "French Archives Index" (the Index to the colonial notarial documents), but not found in the bound series of notarial documents.
- Doc. 1569 Étienne Gagné to Louis DeBlanc. Sale of land, 1781. Listed, but missing.
- Doc. 2167 Mme. Étienne Gagné sells to Sieur Louis Bertrand, her brother, 4 arpents of land on right bank of the river at a place called Grande Ecore. Upper neighbor: Jean Baptiste Davion. Lower neighbor: Mme. Gagnier. Both X'd. 3 pp. French. Should copy o.k.
- Doc. 2168 Mme. Étienne Gagné donates to her daughter, Marie Josephe Gagné, wife of Louis Davion, land on right bank of river at Grande Ecore, bounded on upper side by Mme. Gagné and on lower by Pierre Alorge. 3 pp. French. Should copy o.k.
- Doc. 2345 Louis Davion donates to Étienne Gagné 7 arpents of land "on the opposite bank of Bayou Cuchanhan at the extremity of Grande Ecore," bounded on the upper by Davion and on the lower by Gagné. 2 pp. French. Should photocopy o.k.
- Doc. 2783 Succession of Étienne Gagné. 1797. "Jacques Wallis" X'd both the inventory and estimation and the family meeting, both held the same day. 1802: additional document filed by widow. 26 pp. French. Should photocopy o.k.

Additionally, you will want to extend your research to

- Other censuses, tax rolls, and militia lists in Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*.
- Stray Natchitoches Parish courthouse records found in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University; and in the Natchitoches Parish Records Collection, Louisiana State University Archives.
- Spanish censuses of Nacogdoches, Bayou Pierre, and Neutral Strip, random years, 1792–1829.
- Nacogdoches Archives, Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

—Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG