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Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711

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With a New Introduction by the Author

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Perhaps Bienville was wiser on the question of a French reprisal mission than Davion. His experience in the Alabama campaign had taught him something: for all his impetuosity, the commandant retained a certain caution, especially when it concerned the security of his troops. He was confident an opportunity for reprisal would arise if he could await the initiative of the natives. The commandant's hopes were realized on December 21, 1704 when several chiefs of the Tunica came to the fort to plead for Davion's return to their village. Bienville took advantage of the chiefs' request to propose a bargain: if the Tunica hoped to see Davion return to his mission let them assume responsibility for making the way secure; let the Tunica strike at the Koroa and the Yazoo and bring to the fort the heads of Foucault's murderers as well as the Englishmen responsible for fomenting the aggression. For his part, Bienville agreed to provide a small detachment of Canadians from Fort La Boulaye under Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis and to provision the Tunica with sufficient weapons and ammunition. Moreover, Bienville had recently received word that Gabriel Philippe de Saint-Lambert (commandant of Charles Juchereau de Saint-Denis' old establishment on the Wabash since Charles' death in 1703) was on his way down the Mississippi to Mobile with a detachment of forty Canadians. Saint-Lambert was to be intercepted on the Mississippi and persuaded to join Saint-Denis and the Tunica in a joint attack on the Koroa and the Yazoo.¹³

The agreement having been made with the Tunica, Bienville supplied them with a modicum of war materials and sent the chieftains on their way, Davion to follow in a few weeks with the Canadians who were preparing their pirogues at the fort.¹⁴

When Saint-Denis received his orders from Bienville, however, he balked: apparently the commandant of Fort Louis had been misinformed or, at least, he was not correlating what intelligence he had received. Saint-Denis, still smarting from the dressing down he had received a few years before from Bienville, saw a chance

C13A, 1, f. 456. La Vente no doubt got his information on the affair from Bienville. La Vente [to SME Dirs.], Sept. 20, 1704, ASQ, Lettres, R 77.

13. Davion [to SME Dirs.], Dec. 12, 1702, Sept. 23, 1703, ASME, 344, 57-70. FLC, pp. 98-99. *Journal Historique*, pp. 86-88. Charles Juchereau de Saint-Denis who died on Aug. 27, 1703 is generally referred to in the documents as Juchereau (Jusserot, Jucherot, etc.), while his brother Louis is usually called Saint-Denis (St.-Denys). AC, C11A, 36, f. 402-03, 411. AC, C13A, 1, f. 241, 457, 460-61. FLC, pp. 62, 76, 81, 107, 253.

14. *Journal Historique*, pp. 87-88.

by the English, ravaged and burned the Choctaw's cabins and crops, before making a hasty retreat. On the English Indians' withdrawal, the Choctaw emerged from the woods, launching a heated counter-offensive which resulted in the destruction of several hundred of the English coalition. According to Bienville, the Choctaw "returned to their lands very proud of their deeds, attributing their advantage to the arms that we have given them." The eastern savages temporarily disheartened, the inhabitants of Fort Louis were for the moment freed from the anxiety of being attacked, although the invasion of the Choctaw by the Alabama was surely foreboding.⁴⁹

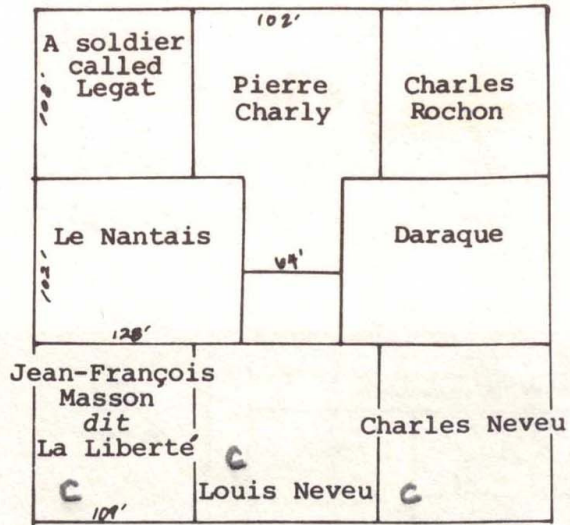
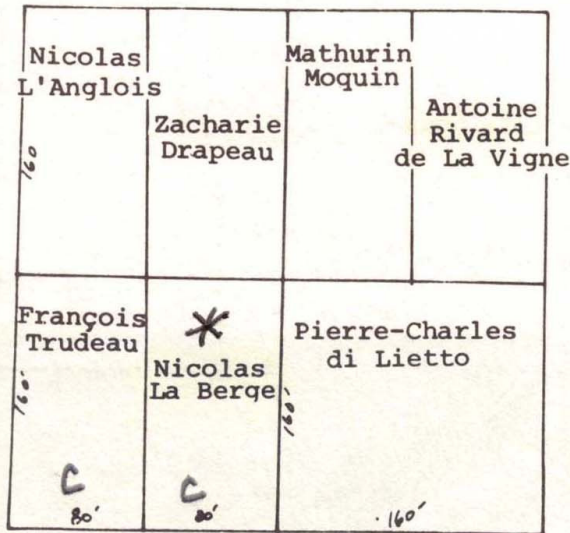
The year 1705 witnessed a number of new arrivals at Mobile. On January 28, Gabriel Philippe de Saint-Lambert and his brother Mandeville arrived at the fort with a small force of renegade Canadians after being forced to abandon their post on the Wabash. Saint-Lambert, whose younger brother, Jean-François Philippe de Hautmesnil, was already serving at Mobile, was a welcome addition to the colony where Bienville was needful of capable, robust officers; Saint-Lambert was quickly assigned the command of Vaulezard's company at 480 *livres* per year in which post he would prove extremely useful for the next year and a half.⁵⁰

Later that year, fifty *voyageurs* arrived from the Illinois country, among them Pierre Sauton and another named Saint-Laurent. Sauton had served at Fort Louis before, along with his traveling companion Joseph Guillet de Bellefeuille. He had in fact been assigned a lot by Iberville on the rue de Boutteville (which later had been given to Charles Dumont and his son when those servant-helpers had followed Albert Davion down to Mobile after Foucault's murder). Saint-Laurent and Sauton had for two years been traveling through the Missouri country, trading with the Indians. "The Missouri," they reported, "where the Spanish come to trade, is the finest [country] in the world." To prove it, the explorers brought three samples of mineral deposits which Bienville judged to be mostly "copper and a metal that is quite unknown." Bienville, however, remembering the disappointing results of past

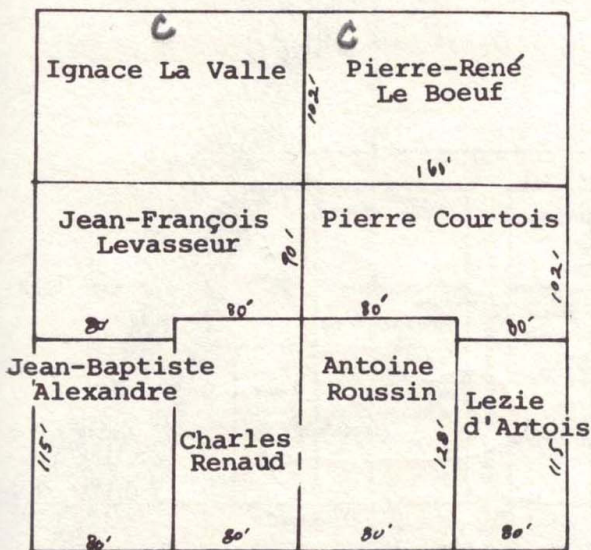
49. *Journal Historique*, pp. 94-95. Bienville to min., April 10, 1706, *loc. cit.*, f. 509-10.

50. AC, F1A, 11, f. 71v, 113v. *Journal Historique*, p. 95. DGFC, I, p. 300. AC, F1A, 10, f. 284; 11, f. 71v, 220; 13, f. 118. Among those arriving with Saint-Lambert were Michel Philippe, Nicolas La Berge and Alexis Guay (whom Bienville was shortly to appoint as *garde-magasin* of the Massacre Island warehouse).

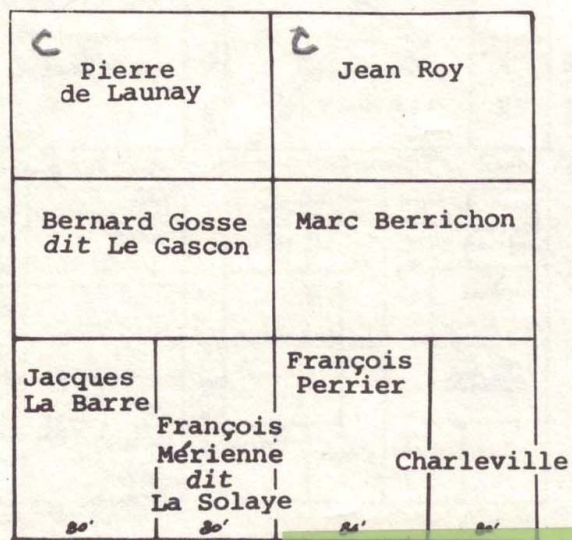




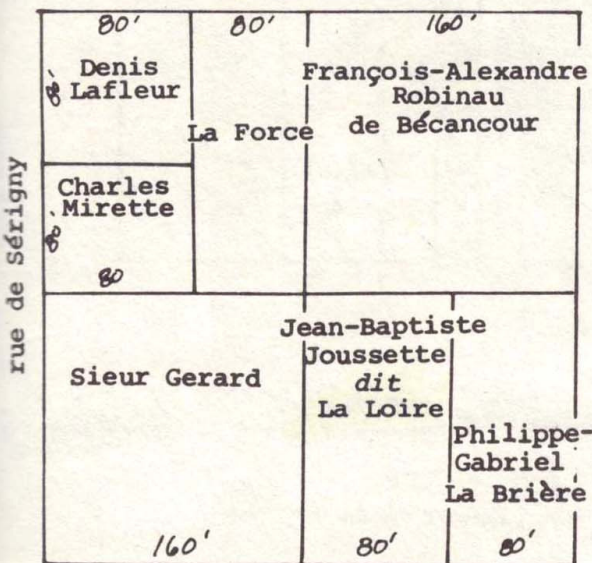
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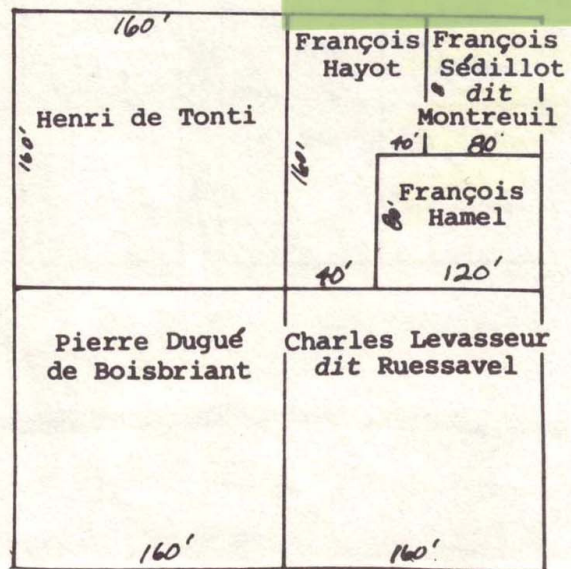


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Central section of town

By Jay Higginbotham