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## **Charles Juchereau De St. Denys**

(Due to length divided here into three parts)

Caldwell, Norman W. in: "Charles Juchereau De St. Denys:  
A French Pioneer in the Mississippi Valley," *The Mississippi  
Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 28, pp. 563-579.

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## **THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW**

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VOLUME XXVIII

June, 1941 to March, 1942

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Published Quarterly by the Mississippi Valley Historical Association

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CHARLES JUCHEREAU DE ST. DENYS: A FRENCH  
PIONEER IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

By NORMAN W. CALDWELL

Historians of the French colonial period of American history have justly given much attention to the exploits of the explorers and missionaries who first opened the Mississippi Valley for settlement. On the other hand, the role played by the merchant and businessman has been given less emphasis. Among those businessmen who supported early schemes of development in the upper Mississippi country was Charles Juchereau de St. Denys.

Charles Juchereau, son of Nicholas Juchereau and Marie-Thérèse Giffard, was born at Quebec on December 6, 1655.<sup>(see fn. 1)</sup> Nicholas Juchereau, an army officer, was descended from one of the earliest settlers of the seigniory of Beauport, near Quebec. After a career in the army, ending in his distinguished service at the defence of Quebec in 1690, he was ennobled.<sup>(see fn. 2)</sup> Little is known of the early life of Charles Juchereau. At the age of thirty-six he received a commission as "lieutenant réformé" in the army.<sup>(see fn. 3)</sup> On April 20, 1692, he signed a marriage bond with Thérèse Denise Migeon, daughter of Jean Baptiste Migeon, Sieur de Bransatt, sometime advocate of the Parlement of Paris and former judge

<sup>1</sup>Census of 1666, in *Rapport de L'Archiviste de la Province de Québec pour 1935-1936* (Quebec), 61 (cited hereafter as *Quebec Arch. Rep.*); P.-G. Roy, "Charles Juchereau de St. Denys, *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques* (Levis), XXXII, 1926, pp. 441-42.

<sup>2</sup>Benjamin Sulte, "Premiers Seigneurs du Canada, 1634-1664," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (Ottawa), 1 ser., I, 1883, pp. 131-32; *id.*, "La Noblesse au Canada avant 1760," *ibid.*, 3 ser., VIII, 1914, p. 122; King to Frontenac and Champigny, April 7, 1692, *Quebec Arch. Rep.*, 1927-1928, 85. After Nicholas Juchereau's death on October 4, 1692 his title of nobility descended to his children. *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Supérieur de Québec* (Quebec), IV, 1888, p. 415 (cited hereafter as *Jugements et Délibérations*).

<sup>3</sup>P. -G. Roy, "Charles Juchereau de St. Denys," *loc. cit.*, The only other references to Charles Juchereau dated before 1690 are those in the Census of 1666 and in a suit at law in 1689. See *Jugements et Délibérations*, III, 1887, pp. 371, 373.

at Montreal.[\(see fn. 4\)](#) At this time Charles Juchereau was, already in possession of the fief of Beaumarchais.[\(see fn. 5\)](#)

If marriage brought responsibilities to Charles Juchereau,[\(see fn. 6\)](#) it also brought him opportunities in the form of new contacts with Canadian officialdom, with whom the De Bransatt family were well acquainted. Accordingly, when in 1693 the king issued an edict creating a new judicial district at Montreal, the Quebec council offered the name of Charles Juchereau "as one of the most capable persons who might be chosen for this office."[\(see fn. 7\)](#) Charles Juchereau's oath of office on October 12, 1693 reveals that he was a man of good life and habits and a communicant of the Roman apostolic faith. A month later he formally assumed his duties.[\(see fn. 8\)](#)

Though the Montreal judgeship brought Juchereau a great

<sup>4</sup>"Notarial Register of A. Adhémar," in P.-G. Roy, *Inventaire d'une collection de pièces judiciaires, notariales . . . conservées aux Archives Judiciaires de Québec* (Beaucéville, 1917), I, 27. Jean Baptiste Migeon had loaned considerable sums to La Salle, advancing him some 46,000 livres in 1678-1679 alone. *Illinois Historical Collections* (Springfield), XXIII, 1934, p. 139, n.; 287, n.

<sup>5</sup>*Jugements et Délibérations*, III, 1887, pp. 371-73. The record of the feudal holdings of the Juchereaus may be traced in P.-G. Roy, *Inventaire des concessions en fief et seigneurie fois et hommages . . . conservés aux Archives de la Province de Québec* (Beaucéville, 1927-1929), vols. I-V. See also a manuscript plat entitled "Québec, Seigneuries Concedées et Etabliés dans l'entendu de la province . . .," dated about 1752 and now in the Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

<sup>6</sup>Five children- Marie Catherine, Daniel, Joseph Charles, Louise-Anne-Thérèse, and Philippe- were born to the union of Charles Juchereau and Thérèse Migeon. P.-G. Roy, *La Famille Juchereau Duchesnay* (Levis, 1903), 107. Father Tanguay mentions only two children. Cyprien Tanguay, *Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Canadiennes depuis la fondation de la colonie jusqu'à nos jours* (Montreal, 1871-1890), V, 30. In addition to the care of his own family, Juchereau had assumed guardianship over the minor Migeon children.

<sup>7</sup>*Jugements et Délibérations*, III, 1887, pp. 760-61; Frontenac and Champigny to Minister, November 4, 1693, *Quebec Arch. Rep., 1927-1928*, 178. The Sulpicians who had held the seigniorship of Montreal now surrendered their rights, thus giving the royal judgeship a new importance. De Bransatt had died in 1690. From 1690 to 1693 Jacques Alexis de Fleury Deschambault served as royal judge. E.-Z. Massicotte, "Arrêts, Edits, Ordonnances, Mandements et Règlements Conservés dans les Archives du Palais de Justice de Montréal," *Trans. Royal Society of Canada*, 3 ser., XI, 1917, pp. 159 ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Jugements et Délibérations*, III, 1887, p. 767; E.-Z. Massicotte, "Allocutions Judiciaires à Montréal au xvii<sup>e</sup> Siècle," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, XXVII, 1921, pp. 232-33; *id.*, "Les Tribunaux et les Officiers de Justice, à Montréal, sous le Régime Française, 1648-1760," *Trans. Royal Society of Canada*, 3 ser., X, 1916, p. 284.

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deal of prestige it probably did not keep him very busy. During the nine years he spent in that capacity (1693-1702) he issued only a half-dozen ordinances, and only once is there record of his having performed any special service.[\(see fn. 9\)](#) Of course he was employed in presiding over judicial proceedings, from which, however, he received little revenue. Consequently it is not surprising to find him complaining that he could hardly support his family on the income from the office.[\(see fn. 10\)](#)

Under such circumstances it was natural that Charles Juchereau should turn to other interests and activities that promised to increase his income. As early as 1692 he had begun to loan money to western traders, and he was soon in close connection with the leaders of the fur trade.[\(see fn. 11\)](#) His sister Françoise later became his associate in this business.[\(see fn. 12\)](#)

However, the beaver trade was not flourishing. Overproduction plus the poor quality of many pelts had depressed the market, and on May 21, 1696, the king's edict repealed certain trading licenses and ordered that beaver be sold only at the public markets.[\(see fn. 13\)](#) It is significant that at this time Charles Juchereau

<sup>9</sup>Massicotte, "Arrêts de Montréal," *Trans. Royal Society of Canada*, 3 ser., XI, 1917, pp. 169-174; XII, 1918, pp. 209-11. In 1695 he is mentioned as directing relief work in connection with the burning of the house of the Gray Nuns at Montreal. See "Narrative of Occurrences, 1694-1695," in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* (Albany, 1855-1887), IX, 595; Roy, *La Famille Juchereau Duchesnay*, 103-104.

<sup>10</sup>To a salary of some few hundred livres Juchereau was permitted to add small fees charged in judicial proceedings. In 1698 the governor and intendant wrote that Juchereau had represented himself as being unable "to subsist in this employment if the King does not have the kindness to grant him an increase in wages." They recommended that the salary be increased to 700 livres, which was the salary of the judge of the Quebec jurisdiction. Frontenac and Champigny to Minister, October 15, 1698, *Quebec Arch. Rep.*, 1928/1929, 380.

<sup>11</sup>Juchereau's loans, financed at least in part by his wife, were made to such men as the Montreal merchants, Simon Réume, Pierre Dailleboust, Jacques Boyer, and Tonty and La Forest. See E.-Z. Massicotte, "La Famille Juchereau de Beaumarchais et de Saint-Denys," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, XXXVI, 1930, pp. 528-29; see *Ill. Hist. Coll.*, XXIII, 1934, pp. 285-89 for examples of obligations in favor of Juchereau and his wife. One of these obligations by Tonty and La Forest amounted to 6,996 livres, 19 sols, 1 denier.

<sup>12</sup>See obligations in "Notarial Register of A. Adhémar, *loc. cit.*, and *Ill. Hist. Coll.*, XXIII, 1934, p. 177, n.

<sup>13</sup>*Canadian Archives Reports*, 1899, Supplement, 94 (cited hereafter as *Can. Arch. Rep.*).

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petitioned "that the necessity of his affairs obliged him to go to France."[\(see fn. 14\)](#) Though the sources on this point are not explicit, it is possible that Juchereau may have sought at this time some commercial concession such as that later accorded him. While in Paris he also represented the beaver trade and attended to the registration of his title of nobility.[\(see fn. 15\)](#)

In any case Juchereau returned from Paris in time to help found the new Canadian company for the export of beaver. He, along with the Chevalier D'Auteuil and Antoine Pascaud, was appointed receiver of beaver at a salary of 6,000 livres.[\(see fn. 16\)](#) However, the evils of the beaver trade continued and the king in 1700 was obliged to order trading to be further restricted to the markets at Montreal, Quebec, and Three Rivers.[\(see fn. 17\)](#) Canadian business men were now desperate, and it was decided to send a mission to Paris to protest against the royal policies. Juchereau accordingly made his second journey to France as a company agent.[\(see fn. 18\)](#)

Again in France, Juchereau seems to have neglected his duties as an agent of the Canadian company and to have applied himself to the promotion of his own schemes.[\(see fn. 19\)](#) It has been suggested above the Juchereau may have sought some concession in the western country as early as 1696. At any rate, he now pushed his case with vigor and found the court receptive to his proposals. The king and his advisors, having established French power on the lower Mississippi, had soon learned of the dangers of English penetration into the Mississippi *via* the Ohio and the

<sup>14</sup>*Jugements et Délibérations*, IV, 1888, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup>P.-G. Roy, "Charles Juchereau de Saint-Denys," *loc. cit.*, 441-42. Nicholas Juchereau's death in 1692 had left his title of nobility to Charles, who first used the title "Sieur de St. Denys" on August 27, 1698. See Frontenac and Champigny to Minister, October 19, 1697, *Quebec Arch. Rep.*, 1928-1929, 350; Massicotte, "La Famille Juchereau de Beaumarchais et de Saint-Denys," *loc. cit.*, 528-29.

<sup>16</sup>MS. in Ayer Collection, Newberry Library. François-Madeleine-Fortuné Dauteuil, Chevalier Ruette, Procurer General at Quebec, had married Marie-Anne Juchereau, eldest sister of Charles. Antoine Pascaud was a leading Montreal merchant and exploiter of government contracts.

<sup>17</sup>*Can. Arch. Rep.*, 1899, Supplement, 99, 100.

<sup>18</sup>Memoir on the Beaver Trade in 1715 by Ruette Dauteuil, *Quebec Arch. Rep.*, 1922-1923, 72.

<sup>19</sup>Though a new agreement was drawn up for the marketing of beavers in France, Juchereau seems to have had nothing to do with it. See Minister to Bégon, July 7, 1701, *Can. Arch. Rep.*, 1899, Supplement, 349.

Tennessee rivers.[\(see fn. 20\)](#) Opportunities for English encroachment were increased by the restrictive trade policies then being applied by the French Government. Although some beaver had been sold in Louisiana, the king ordered in 1701 that only buffalo and other skins be taken.[\(see fn. 21\)](#) Under such circumstances steps to meet the English menace would be necessary, and such men as Henry de Tonty and the Abbé de La

Salle were soon urging the government to fortify the lower Ohio.[\(see fn. 22\)](#)

With the fortification of the lower Ohio being advocated, it may be assumed that Juchereau's proposition now met with careful consideration from the first. The precedent for such a project had already been made in the grant of 1697 to Pierre Le Sueur authorizing an establishment among the Sioux. Le Sueur was at that time on his way to the upper Mississippi.[\(see fn. 23\)](#) It cannot be definitely determined whether Juchereau was familiar with all the arguments for the fortification of the Ohio. At any rate, that he was quite capable of presenting his case is witnessed by a document he laid before Count Pontchartrain on February 27, 1700. After reciting the possibilities of development of the lower Ohio region in the form of general agriculture and silk production, he revealed his project for making leather and securing wool from bison skins. He presented himself as one well experienced in the commerce of the country and eminently capable of developing such a project. He would undertake an establishment at his own expense, asking only for a six-year monopoly and the right to take thirty Canadians with him.

<sup>20</sup>For rumors concerning English encroachments on the Ohio at this time, see letter of M. Dubos à Thoynard, July 8, 1699, Bibliothèque Nationale, f. f., n. a., 9294, fol. 87; Observations on the Relation of Le Sueur, undated, Archives Nationales, Colonies, C<sup>13</sup>C, 2:31-31v (cited hereafter as Arch. Nat., Col.). For the relation of French deserters and *coureurs de bois* to the English penetration of the lower Ohio, see Verner W. Crane, "The Tennessee River as the Road to Carolina," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, III, 1916, pp. 3-18.

<sup>21</sup>Memoir of the King to De Callières and Champigny, October 31, 1701, Arch. Nat., Col., B, 23:44.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, Tonty's "Relation de la Rivière de Mississipy," February 28, March 4, 1700, Bibliothèque Nationale, f. f., n. a., 9097, fol. 105; Memoir of Abbé Jean Cavalier, *ibid.*, 9290, fol. 217.

<sup>23</sup>Minister to De Callières, June 22, 1701, Arch. Nat., Col., B, 22:272<sup>v</sup>; Minister to Frontenac, April 28, 1697, *ibid.*, B, 19:248-50. For Le Sueur's account, see B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (New York, 1851), III, 23-28. The grant made to La Mothe Cadillac at Detroit was a similar concession.

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Of course he would not trade in beaver. In closing he did not fail to stress that the projected establishment would so align the savages with French interests "that consequently they could serve us against those who would wish to oppose us or destroy the Establishment of the Colony."[\(see fn. 24\)](#) Juchereau's proposal was doubtless supported by the solicitations of certain friends at the court, especially the Countess de St. Pierre.[\(see fn. 25\)](#) Nevertheless, after his return to Canada he was so much in doubt as to his success that he asked for other favors.[\(see fn. 26\)](#) The king, however, had already approved the concession on the Ohio. The terms of this grant may be summarized as follows:[\(see fn. 27\)](#)

1. The concessionaire was permitted to take a company of twenty-four men and eight canoes to the lower Ohio country.
2. *Eau de vie*, though it might be taken for use by the French, was not to be sold to the savages.
3. Juchereau himself might either remain in Canada or go to the concession.
4. The building of tanneries and such other buildings as might be necessary to the establishment was authorized.
5. Each year, for the first three years, three canoes might be sent to Montreal for necessary supplies.
6. The concessionaire might deal in any skins fit to tan or bleach ex-

<sup>24</sup>"Mémoire pour L'Etablissement d'une Colonie à Mississipy," Arch. Nat., Col., C<sup>13</sup>B, 1:54; Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale, 1614-1754* (Paris, 1883), V, 349-50. The almoner was also to serve as missionary to the Indians. M. Noel Fauteux points out that La Salle had stressed the possibilities of the tannery business in that region, while Father Charlevoix believed that the Illinois bison produced the finest skins in America. A flourishing tannery had operated at Quebec since 1668, the proprietor, Etienne Charest, having gained a considerable fortune from its operation. Perhaps Juchereau knew Charest. Joseph-Noel Fauteux, *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada sous le régime français* (Quebec, 1927), II, 405-415.

<sup>25</sup>P.-G. Roy, "Charles Juchereau de Saint-Denys," *loc. cit.*, 441-42.

<sup>26</sup>Juchereau to Minister, October 20, 1701, Arch. Nat., Col., C<sup>11</sup>A, 36:399. He writes: "If I can not be Commissaire in Canada, grant, Sir, that I may be on the Mississippi, or make me sub-delegate to the Intendant. Help, if you will, this unfortunate one, who seeks only to live."

<sup>27</sup>King to De Callières and Champigny, June 4, 1701, *Can. Arch. Rep., 1899*, Supplement, 355-56; Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, V, 350-51; Ministerial order, June 5, 1701, *Can. Arch. Rep., 1899*, Supplement, 356. This edict was registered at Montreal June 2, 1702. Massicotte, "Arrêts de Montréal," *Trans. Royal Society of Canada*, 3 ser., XII, 1918, p. 210. See also Minister to De Callières and Champigny, June 4, 1701, *Arch. Nat., Col., B*, 22:264-65.

cept beaver. Violation of this clause would invalidate the whole contract.

7. Any lead or copper mines which might be discovered were to be developed.

8. An almoner for the establishment was to be supported. The concessionaire might choose this priest with the consent of the bishop of Quebec.

The extent of the grant is not mentioned, this evidently being left to the decision of Le Moynes d'Iberville.[\(see fn. 28\)](#)

Iberville from the first showed himself eager to cooperate with Juchereau in this project, which he alleged to be necessary "in order to prevent the trade which the coureurs de bois are able to carry on via that place [the lower Ohio], among the English." He also asked the right to send a few troops to the site pending Juchereau's arrival in order to prevent any further penetration of that region on the part of the English.[\(see fn. 29\)](#) On the other hand the Canadian company was hostile toward Juchereau from the first, doubtless because of fear of trade rivalry.[\(see fn. 30\)](#)

Juchereau was soon busy with the problem of financing his project, which must have involved a considerable sum as measured in Canadian resources of that day. He mentions at one time expenses of 40,000 livres, though this may not represent the total

<sup>28</sup>Writing on July 2, 1701 from La Rochelle, Iberville had suggested a grant of "two leagues on both banks of the mouth of this river [the Ohio], and six leagues in depth." The Minister wrote on the margin of this letter: "Good, but that is rather large. Do you not think it fitting to reduce it a bit in size?" It must be assumed that the grant was made for six years in accordance with Juchereau's request. Iberville to Minister, July 4, 1701, Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, IV, 478; Minister to Iberville, July 20, 1701, *ibid.*, 487.

<sup>29</sup>Iberville to Minister, July 2, 1701, Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, IV, 478-79; Crane, "The Tennessee as a Road to Carolina," *loc. cit.*, 14. Iberville's benevolent attitude toward Juchereau may be explained by noting that Iberville had married Marie Thérèse Pollet, daughter of François Pollet, Sieur de la Combe Pocaterie and Marie-Anne Juchereau, eldest sister of Charles Juchereau. P.-G. Roy, *Inventaire des Concessions en Fief*, V, 219-21; II, 218 ff.; *Dictionary of American Biography*, IX, 456-57; Memoir of La Potherie to Minister, 1701-1702, *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, XXII, 1916, p. 223; Tanguay, *Dictionnaire Généalogique*, VI, 413.

<sup>30</sup>The directors of the company had recommended in 1701 that a series of out-posts be constructed, one each to be located on the Miami, the lower Ohio, the Wisconsin, and among the Sioux. The latter post was to be built "to prevent Le Sueur from continuing to trade with the Sioux" rather than to ward off the English. Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, V, 360-62.

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