



THE OHIO VALLEY-GREAT LAKES ETHNOHISTORY ARCHIVES: THE MIAMI COLLECTION

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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
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hoping thereby to set a good example, but though he baptized some of the dying, the medicine men persisted in trying to assuage the pestilence by appeasing the *manitous*, especially that of the French who they thought had power over their own. Half of the village soon died.[\(see fn. 71\)](#)

That the plague which raged among the Mascouten also ravaged the French can be assumed. The winter of 1702-1703, and the year 1704, saw epidemics of sickness both in Canada and Louisiana.[\(see fn. 72\)](#) In any case, Juchereau himself died in the autumn of 1703, his death sealing the doom of the establishment.[\(see fn. 73\)](#)

Of the accomplishments at the post little is known. Some hunting had been done and several thousand buffalo skins had been collected. It is probable that some of these were tanned into leather. The Sieur de St. Lambert, who was second in command to Juchereau, reports that he started to remove the skins and leather down the river, but lost them through a rise in the water and by theft by the Indians.[\(see fn. 74\)](#) As for Juchereau's men, those

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 236-41; Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1744), III, 394-95. Charlevoix plainly follows Marest's account.

⁷²Beauharnois and Vaudreuil in a letter to the Minister, November 15, 1703, refer to the sickness which had been prevalent the previous winter. Arch. Nat., Col., C¹¹A, 21:17. See also French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III, 3132.

⁷³Bienville to Minister, September 6, 1704, Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, V, 368; P.-G. Roy, *La Famille Juchereau Duchesnay*, 107. Henry de Tonty's death is also reported in Bienville's letter of the above date. Justin Winsor's statement that Juchereau's post was overthrown by an attack of the Miami seems without foundation. *The Mississippi Basin* (Boston, 1895), 70-71. See also Fauteux, *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada*, II, 417, and Lansden, *History of the City of Cairo*, 21-22. La Harpe does refer to the war "among the Indians there," but mentions no attack on the French. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III, 33. Fauteux and Lansden are plainly in error when they give 1705 as the date of Juchereau's death.

⁷⁴C. W. Alvord, *The Illinois Country*, 134-35; Arch. Nat., Col., C¹³C, 2:346, 471 ff. See also Jacob P. Dunn, "The Mission to the Ouabache," *Indiana Historical Society Publications* (Indianapolis), III, 1895, p. 256. According to La Harpe, Bienville sent Louis Juchereau to assist St. Lambert as he descended the river. St. Lambert arrived in New Orleans on January 28, 1705. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III, 32-33. Bienville reports that 8,000 to 9,000 buffalo skins as well as some beaver were received from the post. Bienville to Minister, September 6, 1704, Arch. Nat., Col., C¹³A, 1:457-58. Mrs. Scott, relying upon La Harpe, says that 13,000 buffalo skins were collected. Scott, "Old Fort

who survived undoubtedly became *coureurs de bois*. Le Moyne Bienville in 1704 mentions that as many as 110 or 120 men were in that vicinity and that beaver pelts were being collected there. Some voyageurs had even asked for the right to take these furs to France for sale. [\(see fn. 75\)](#)

At the time of Juchereau's death, accusations were being lodged against him to the effect that his activities on the Ohio were centered about the beaver trade rather than in the tannery business. The Company of Canada led in these accusations, charging that Juchereau had followed in Le Sueur's footsteps. They lamented the fact that employees of their own were constantly deserting "to join with this commerce." [\(see fn. 76\)](#) Bienville, it has been observed, admitted that voyageurs and *coureurs de bois* were operating in northern Louisiana in small bands. [\(see fn. 77\)](#) At Detroit it was charged that Juchereau and Pascaud had connived to trade throughout the West even "up to the neighborhood of Detroit." [\(see fn. 78\)](#) M. Sulte charges that Juchereau traded in collusion with Le Sueur, La Forest, Tonty, and Pascaud at Green Bay, operating through *coureurs de bois* centered at that post. [\(see fn. 79\)](#) It was also charged that Juchereau and his men hunted slaves among the southern Indians. [\(see fn. 80\)](#) The information at hand does not warrant these accusations. The death of Juchereau and the collapse of his establishment silenced his enemies, while the truth

⁷⁵Bienville to Minister, September 6, 1704, Arch. Nat., Col., C¹³A, 1:457-58.

⁷⁶Memoir concerning the control of affairs of the company, November 10, 1703, Arch. Nat., Col., C¹¹A, 21:182.

⁷⁷Bienville to Minister, September 6, 1704, Arch. Nat., Col., C¹³A, 1:457.

⁷⁸The writer of the Memoir of 1703 says: "It is that which makes the public jealous, and causes all these escapades of licentious Canadians, who say bluntly that it is only the virtuous and the obedient who are victims to it. They are indeed, not altogether wrong in that; for it is grievous [*sic*] to them to see a few individuals skim the milk and take the pick of the wool of the country, through the licenses and permits given to them." "Report on Detroit in 1703, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, XXXIII, 1904, p. 175.

⁷⁹Sulte, "Henry de Tonty," *loc. cit.*, 27-28. See also Fauteux, *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada*, II, 416-17.

⁸⁰La Harpe writes: "On the 10th August [1702] M. de Bienville was informed that M. St. Denis and some Canadians had invaded the territory of our allies to capture slaves, which he ordered restored." French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III, 28. The writer may refer to Louis Juchereau, who was then an officer under Bienville, though the mention of Canadians raises some doubt. Charles Juchereau was then supposedly at Michilimakinac.

about his activities in the western country will probably forever remain buried with him. Even Thérèse Migeon seems to have been silent after the death of her husband.

Juchereau's idea, however, lived on. The strategic importance of a post at the mouth of the Ohio was not to be ignored by the French throughout the rest of their control of the West. In the 1740's the construction of such a post was seriously considered and in 1757 Fort Massac arose as the successor to Juchereau's fort. [\(see fn. 81\)](#) Then, too, the commercial possibilities of that region tempted even the Jesuits to speculate upon the establishment of such a project as Juchereau had conceived. [\(see fn. 82\)](#) Somewhat later a proposal was brought forth which contemplated abandoning Detroit and moving some of the inhabitants from that post to the mouth of the Ohio, where the possibilities of trade in buffalo skins and of the development of mines seemed promising. [\(see fn. 83\)](#)

So ended the career of Charles Juchereau de St. Denys. Though not a man of genius, he nevertheless remains a foremost member of that group of hardy Canadians who pioneered in the great work of opening up the western country to those who later came to inherit it. Juchereau was a man of vision. His attempt to develop a commercial enterprise that was not based upon the beaver trade or mining was unique, though premature. Like the majority of his colleagues he probably did not hesitate to disregard the red tape of governmental control which the French despotism sought to fasten upon the colonies. Perhaps, like La Salle, Juchereau's chief fault was that he staked all upon the success of his single project. Like La Salle he lost all in the attempt.

⁸¹On this question see the author's "Shawneetown, a Chapter in the Indian History of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Springfield), XXXII, 1939, pp. 193-205. Father Charlevoix said in 1721: "There is no place in Louisiana more fit, in my opinion, for a settlement than this, nor where it is of more consequence to have one.... A fort with a good garrison would keep the savages in awe, especially the Cherokees, who are at present the most numerous nation of this continent." French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III, 123.

⁸²Letter of Father Gravier, July 28, 1706, Arch. Nat., Col., C¹³A, 1:573-74.

⁸³Letter of M. de Rémonville, September 6, 1710, Margry, *Découvertes et Etablissements*, V, 369-70.

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