

ST. LOUIS TRADE & TRADERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

• 1766-1774 •

VALENTIN DEVIN &
JEAN-BAPTISTE PAPILLON

BY SHARON K. PERSON



Spanish officials required another five years to establish an effective presence in St. Louis; a first effort by Ulloa to secure a Spanish presence on the west bank was to send captain Francisco Ríu y Morales to the mouth of the Missouri in 1767 to build Spanish forts. Ríu was instructed to defer to St. Ange in all matters related to Indians, and his dutiful reports to Ulloa (referenced below) bring to light the workings of the far Missouri River trade for several years in the 1760s. Entering the trade with Indian nations provided a means for villagers to gain an economic foothold in fledgling St. Louis. Indeed, furs were the currency with which the habitants procured their everyday needs in the village.⁴

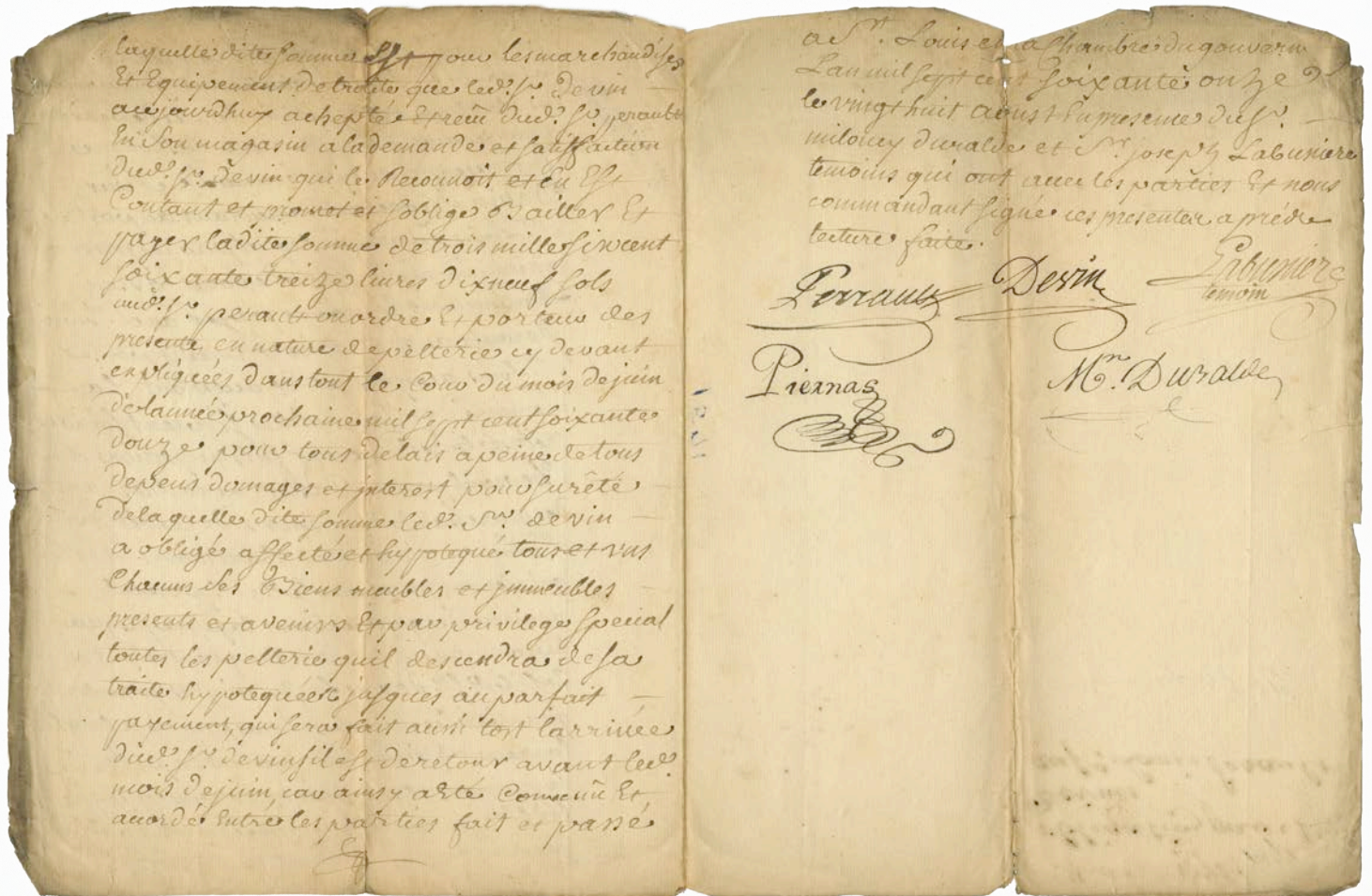
Two brothers from a local family came to Joseph Labuxière, the royal notary, to have him draft a contract in April 1766, the first known fur-trade agreement written in St. Louis.⁵ Antoine and Jean-Baptiste Desgagné pooled resources of approximately 2,000 livres to form a *société* for their planned ascent of the Mississippi to trade with the Sioux.⁶ Former French marine officers from Fort de Chartres and other prominent Illinois-Country families took leading roles in the local trade. Their arrangements as small-time *négociants* (merchants, the top level in the hierarchy of the fur trade) and *commerçants* (mid-level) were often not much grander than the agreement between the Desgagné brothers, for they did not have the financial resources of the major merchants. The latter were the particularly well-funded men who could travel to New Orleans with each year's collected furs and return with next season's merchandise. The arrival of still more *commerçants* and *voyageurs* swelled the number of potential traders, and among them were two who to this day are unknown to readers of traditional St. Louis histories, Valentin Devin and Jean-Baptiste Papillon.

Devin and Papillon had no direct role in the rise of the wealthy river barons in the late eighteenth century. Neither were they the scribbling sort to record observations on the Indians among whom they conducted trade—Papillon, though a shrewd negotiator, did not know how to write, even to sign his name. His origins remain obscure, although he has the grander legacy of the two, with the creek and town in Nebraska that bear his name.⁷ Devin, on the other hand, embodied the most desired qualities that the French and Spanish governments sought in traders bound for Indian nations.⁸ Both men perished upriver: Devin (d. 1772) on the Des Moines River and Papillon (d. 1774) near the confluence of the Platte with the Missouri. The facts of their passings were tersely subsumed in legal processes. The documents triggered by their deaths shed light on aspects of the

trade that received little elaboration in government correspondence: numerous reports listed the types of furs shipped to New Orleans, but Devin's inventory illuminates the French side of the trade in the items he carried to the Sioux villages. Officials regularly expressed frustration with traders they considered beyond their control. The raw, minimally processed estate file of Jean-Baptiste Papillon serves as a poignant counterpoint to official correspondence, with evidence of the complex arrangements a trader had to take to fulfill the contracts he had made in St. Louis.⁹

The (mostly) regular cycle of the trade followed a seasonal flow: in late summer and fall, Illinois-Country *négociants* were in New Orleans, delivering peltries from the previous year's trade and purchasing new merchandise. They requested permission from the governor general to ascend the Mississippi with the goods they had purchased and to conduct trade with one or two Indian nations for the coming year.¹⁰ After arriving back north, the *négociants* awaited the descent of the *commerçants* with the *voyageurs* and *engagés* they had hired for the year (sometimes with a delegation of Indians). The *négociants* claimed their furs and arranged for bateaux to ship them downriver. Local licenses for the next round of trade were granted to smaller *négociants* and *commerçants* in St. Louis, and amid all the sorting out who was traveling where and with whom, *négociants* apportioned their trade goods for the coming year. From mid-summer to early fall, the traders departed St. Louis, in convoy-like fashion whenever possible. Sometimes their pirogues conveyed members of the Indian delegations back upriver.¹¹ The traders spent the late fall and winter months at their encampments in or near Indian villages, bargaining goods for furs until the exchanges reached an end, and weather and river conditions allowed their return to St. Louis.

From late November 1767 to May 1768, St. Ange and Ríu provided gifts from the Spanish government stores to over thirty visiting groups from more than a dozen Indian nations.¹² Working through a handful of interpreters,¹³ St. Ange and Ríu presented the gifts, assisted by the Spanish storekeeper. He counted nearly six hundred Indian visitors, and since the first pages of his records went missing even before Ríu made his report, the total had to exceed that—all in all, twice the resident population of the village.³⁶ Among the western delegations were the Pawnees “from three distinct places,” Otos, Big Osages, Kansas, Missouris, Little Osages¹⁵ and Iowas. A party of seventeen Missouris with their chief Caiquè received the following:¹⁶



- 20 lbs. gunpowder
- 40 lbs. balls and 10 lbs. small shot
- 5 blankets
- 6 ¼ aunes of limbourg cloth
- 4 white and 4 striped trade shirts
- 12 each single-edged hunting knives and double-edged *siamoises*
- 1 ½ lbs. vermillion
- 4 small boxes
- 2 pieces of wool ribbon and 2 balls of wool
- 12 awls
- 100 gunflints
- 100 tinkling cones or bells (*cascabeles*),

- 1 lb. thread and 50 needles for sewing
- 12 combs
- 24 gunworms (wormscrews)
- 1 lb. beads
- 1 lb. wire
- 7 lbs. cooking vessels
- 2 large and 2 small mirrors
- 2 *fusils*

After more than five months of gift-giving ceremonies, St. Ange and Riu turned to the local commerçants and négociants and finalized licenses for the coming year in mid-June 1768.¹⁷ The three Pawnee villages were the most distant, and the licenses for two of them went to two former French marine sergeants: Eugène Pourré dit Beausoleil¹⁸ received the trade at *Stabaco*.¹⁹

Agreement between Valentin Devin and Louis Perrault, August 28, 1771, signature page. Devin agreed, by the next May, to bring Perrault 3,673 livres and 19 sols value in deerskins and beaver and otter pelts. The agreement was written and witnessed by Joseph Labuxière, with Miloney Duralde, St. Louis's first surveyor, as an additional witness. Commandant Pedro Piernas approved the agreement. French and Spanish Archives, no. 1571, Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

The accumulated knowledge of the local fur-trade networks about the western waterways included Papillon Creek. The Mackay map was used by Lewis and Clark on their American exploration of the Missouri. Finiels, Nicolas

De, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, William Henry Harrison, James Mackay, and John Evans. *Map of Missouri River and vicinity from Saint Charles, Missouri, to Mandan villages of North Dakota: used by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in their expedition up Missouri River, 1798.* Library of Congress 2002621122



On June 15, Pourré drew up an agreement with Ste. Genevieve négociant Jean Datchurut for 4,000 livres of trade merchandise to supply his trade.²⁰ Pierre Montardy received the village of *Tapage*,²¹ and he immediately hired Jean Perin *dit* Boucher as his commerçant-voyageur who would make the trip upriver. The two drew up an agreement with négociant Louis Lambert for the value of 6,907 livres of merchandise.²² It was well-known that an illegal (unlicensed) trader by the name of Lacroix *dit* Marantel was living at Tapage, and had been for some years. When Boucher met Lacroix upriver, the former managed to put the latter in his debt, and the steps Boucher took in St. Louis to secure repayment may be what eventually brought Lacroix back to St. Louis.²³ The trade at the third village, *Panimaha*, was awarded to Jean-Marie Cardinal.²⁴ Cardinal is known in St. Louis as one of the casualties of the famous 1780 Battle of St. Louis, but his life was more remarkable than his death, extending through the Indian-French world of the mid-eighteenth century. In fact, Cardinal was likely the cultural broker for the far western

trade since he had been living in the Panimaha village from the mid-1750s with his Panimaha wife and their ever-increasing number of children. In all likelihood, at some point he descended the Missouri and crossed the future site of St. Louis as he traveled to Cahokia or Fort de Chartres. But in the summer of 1768, Cardinal, without an established residence in St. Louis, relied on Montardy's commerçant-voyageur Boucher to supply him with trade merchandise.²⁵

Joseph Labuxière, the royal notary, picked up the Otos trade. Labuxière, whose legal expertise was in high demand,²⁶ if not highly remunerative, declared he could not go upriver, and he turned over the responsibility to a commerçant, who in turn hired an engagé to go to both the Oto and Pawnee villages.²⁷ (The combination of the Oto with the Pawnee was repeated in several contracts through the 1780s.) The traders received these licenses for just one year, and the method of distribution that year and the following years was not stated—perhaps the most lucrative destinations, or the most distant, were awarded on

To the Weeping Water Creek	25 SW	29	
River Plat or Shoal River	600 SW	32	600
Butterfly or Papilion Creek	18 SW	3	
Marquette Creek	22 NE	7	
Antient Village of the Ottawas	SW	11	
Antient Ayanways Village			
below a bluff on N.E. side	NE	6	
Bowyer River	25 NE	11	
Council Bluff Establishment	SW	12	650
Soldiers River	40 NE	39	
Encampment de pon Little Sioux R	80 NE	44	700
The main can de or had spirit creek	SW	55	
ascend the bend of the river to the			
N.E. the gorge of ^{which} only 9/10 yds		21	
an Island 3 miles N.E. of the making			
bluffs Village		27	800
bluffs River	35 NE	14	
Big Sioux River	110 NE	3	850
Commencement of the Copers			
Cobalt spirit's Ballum bluff	SW	27	880
hot or burning Bluff	SW	30	
White Stone River	30 NE	8	
Petite arc an old Village			
mouth of Little Bow Creek	15 SW	20	
River Jacques or James River	90 NE	12	950
The Calumet Bluff of minimal	SW	10	
Antient fortification Goodmans	50	16	970
Plum Creek	12 NE	10	
White Paint Creek	28 SW	8	

William Clark's journals included non-diary pages for the weather and for lists of Indians and waterways, such as this one. Ascending the Missouri, the voyagers encountered "Weeping Water Creek, River Plat or Shoal River, Butterfly or Papilion Creek." Jean-Baptiste Papillon's name appeared in various spellings, depending on the writer. Clark Family Collection, Volume 4. Voorhis Journal 4, image N26891. Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

appears in the estate documents, but his engagés Pierre Marcil,³⁸ Pierre Simon, and one Duvet, must have cared for him until his death and buried him. The engagés, as hired men, did not have the authority to continue trading, so they packed up the furs their employer had already received, the remaining trade merchandise, plus the camp equipment, and headed back to St. Louis.

Pirogues laden with peltry pulled in at the mouth of the Missouri before making their final descent to St. Louis, and négociants who had equipped the voyages inspected the cargoes and satisfied their claims. Here they also learned of losses. Devin's three engagés navigated to the mouth of the Missouri with the beaver and otter pelts and deerskins they had collected under Devin's supervision. Under the watchful eyes of authorities, the pirogue and its contents were ushered downstream to St. Louis. Devin's seven creditors (his sister locally represented by négociant Louis Perrault) agreed on the division of the peltry. The trade merchandise, in contrast, could not be sorted out well enough to determine which providers had supplied which portion of the goods, and so estimators set to work inventorying the goods in order to sell them at public auction.³⁹

Devin's inventory is one of our most important extant documents dealing with the fur trade out of St. Louis; it is the earliest known, most complete, and most painstakingly detailed, list of merchandise that was taken upriver from St. Louis for the trade.⁴⁰ Devin's merchandise included cloth and finished clothing, metal objects of all sorts, firearms and gunpowder, and items that might decorate clothing or adorn the body. Some of Devin's cargo mirrored the government gifts of European powers for decades past: gunpowder, balls, awls, trade rifles,⁴¹ gunflints, gunworms, needles, thread, knives,⁴² vermillion, limbourg (a cheap, coarse woolen staple item), trade shirts, wool ribbon, beads, cooking vessels, mirrors, and wire.⁴³ Several items were a notch above the basic government gifts, such as eight blankets (*mantas*) fashioned into *capotes* with hoods of limbourg. One red-colored *capote* was decorated with wool ribbon and metal buttons. But Devin also had a number of pieces of new and used tailored items: two new, lined vests (*chalecos*), one of calamanco (usually colorful and glossy on one side⁴⁴) and the other indian (a printed calico) were among the higher-valued items by the estimators. Estimators described a used jacket (*chupa*) of *tafetan, en frances satin*. A colorful item was a pair of used,

blue-striped breeches of pure cotton. Among a handful of used sleeping caps estimators counted a single, new red wool hat. All together, about half of the clothing items were used, rather than new, for used clothing had always been common in trade merchandise. Devin or his sister had perhaps purchased clothing for the fur trade at estate auctions in New Orleans. Conceivably, the siblings sacrificed them from the family's wardrobe. If, as stated, Devin's personal clothing was removed from the mass of trade goods, what was the intended role of these finished items in the trade? In terms of the stark economic exchange, were they simply calculated to be more valuable? Would Devin use the more interesting items strategically—to sustain the process of the trade—over months he planned to spend among the Sioux?

The metal items in Devin's cargo were no less varied than the clothing. St. Louis was home to several artisans and metal-workers: the goldsmith Joseph Motard, royal *armurier* Jean-Baptiste Hervieux, and numerous blacksmiths, of whom two of the more prominent were Gabriel Dodier and Martin Baram.⁴⁵ Notably different from government gifts were more than fifty tin (*estaño*) and copper earrings in the form of circles, one earring made from a gold (finger) ring, thirteen crosses, and tin bracelets. Six small spoons of pewter (*peltre*) might find various uses. In addition to eight pounds of "ordinary" beads (*abalorio*), four pounds of black and white beads, two pounds of large glass beads, Devin had brought a ten-strand wampum belt, and three dozen buttons of stone mounted in tin. For social occasions, he had a supply of eighteen redstone calumets,⁴⁶ three carrots of tobacco, and a pound of chocolate (no alcohol appears in the inventory). Spanish authorities had mused about building a fort at the mouth of the Des Moines River, without ever effecting such a project. Nevertheless, a strong trading relationship between Spanish St. Louis and the Sioux might keep the British at bay.⁴⁷

* * *

The commerçants and voyageurs and their Indian trading partners often spent an entire season in proximity to each other. The warm fires of hospitality in Indian villages surely drew hosts and visitors together. Likely, the rigor of legal contracts and the vehemence of official decrees diminished as each paddle-stroke carried traders farther away from creditors and authorities

in St. Louis. As much as Spanish lieutenant governors railed against rogue, unlicensed traders, mid-level commerçants who were at the posts sometimes undertook "manoeuvres" upriver, redistributing among themselves the merchandise that had they had obtained under contract in St. Louis. The modification that Boucher made at St. Louis to include Jean-Marie Cardinal in the trade was acceptable, and Labuxière rewrote the contract to reflect the change. If commerçants⁴⁸ were empowered to make judgments upriver about the use of trade merchandise, the line separating a reasonable redistribution and rogue trading might be drawn only by the creditors in St. Louis.

In the spring of 1773, British traders were discovered to have penetrated deep into Spanish territory to conduct trade with the Little Osages. This bold action of a rival power realized the worst fears of the Spanish, and had unambiguous consequences for the foreign traders who were apprehended.⁴⁹ In September that same year, still watchful for any infractions that might damage the good conduct of the trade, lieutenant governor Pedro Piernas granted a trading passport to Jacques Chauvin, Jean Salé *dit* Lajoie, and their five *engagés* to carry out trade at the Oto village. One paragraph of the passport left no doubt about Piernas's expectations:

The traders (Chauvin and LaJoye) are forbidden to sell, loan, give, or intrust (sic) to any of the Frenchmen who have remained and are at the present time in the nations, any kind of trading merchandise or goods, no matter of what nature, for trading purposes, and not even for their own personal use. On the contrary, they are commanded to force these Frenchmen, in our name, and by virtue of this deprivation, to return to this post with all their employees without exception in the month of July the next year, 1774, at the latest, whether they have finished their trading or not. They shall not leave any kind of goods either in this nation or in any others or on the way, or still less in the hands of any Frenchmen under any pretext whatever, under pain of being severely punished according to the circumstances and necessities of the case.⁵⁰

All traders working upriver out of St. Louis received similar admonishments. Along the way to the Oto villages, the party would pass several posts where they would encounter French traders, but Piernas may well have intended Chauvin and Lajoye to dislodge Jean-Baptiste Papillon from the Otos' villages.⁵¹

Papillon's known existence in the village of St. Louis is brief—in 1769, he purchased a small amount of merchandise from Ste. Genevieve négociant Louis Chamard, who had requested permission in New Orleans the previous summer to trade with the Big Osages and the Otos.⁵² Other providers of merchandise for 1769, names of Papillon's engagés, and whether this could have been his first journey to the Oto villages remain unknown. In July 1770, Papillon contracted with carpenter Pierre Tousignan to build a house in St. Louis. Papillon's land was a bit removed to the south from the string of residential lots, near or alongside (*prés et joignant*) the Petite Rivière (later famously known as Mill Creek).⁵³ Papillon agreed to supply the hinges for the two doors and shutters on the four windows. All the labor—digging, cutting, sawing, building, bouzillage, and whitewashing—was left fully to Tousignan. He had eleven months to complete the house before Papillon planned to return, in June 1771.⁵⁴

The building contract accomplished, Papillon prepared for his trading voyage by gathering merchandise from five different providers over five days in August 1770, including three of St. Louis's most prominent négociants: Jean-Baptiste Sarpy,⁵⁵ Louis Lambert *dit* LaFleur,⁵⁶ and Joseph Segond.⁵⁷ Papillon promised to pay in 1771 with a variety of skins and furs—deer, otter, and beaver. Most striking, he promised three *robes matachées*—painted buffalo robes—two to Sarpy and one to Segond.⁵⁸ These colorful items may have been destined to adorn St. Louis homes, to find their way to New Orleans or, given the international connections of the merchants, possibly to be shipped to France. In addition, Papillon promised Michel Rolet *dit* LaDéroute eleven *robes de boeuf*, the unpainted sort, typically used as a bedcovering.⁵⁹

It is unclear whether Jean-Baptiste Papillon ever returned to St. Louis, for several of his earlier creditors remained unpaid, and several notes in his inventory papers suggest that he remained at the Oto village. Papillon, unable to write, always inscribed a cross in lieu of a signature—but fortunately for historians, other traders who crossed his path possessed writing skills. Three

small notes among his papers were written in Pawnee and Oto villages, several hundred miles upriver from St. Louis. The first, dated August 1771, obliged Papillon to procure thirteen buffalo robes for Pierre Blondin.⁶⁰ This suggests that Papillon had taken trade merchandise from Blondin, and promised the robes as (future) payment. Michel Lamy⁶¹ wrote this agreement, in typical, if abbreviated, contract form, noting *faite et pase au granpane* (made and passed at the Grand Pawnee village⁶²) and then Lamy himself signed as witness. This extraordinary effort by Lamy and Papillon to use official formulations indicate that this was no rogue, off-the-books wheeling and dealing. The next year, Papillon again received trade merchandise at the Oto village. The two agreements, dated June 8, 1772, and inscribed *aux otos*, were between Papillon and Pierre La Déroute (with Blondin as a witness). One note was a promise to pay La Déroute and *compa(g)nie* 610 livres in beaver and other pelts of their choice for merchandise on an account which Papillon promised to privilege above all other engagements (a promise typically made to the last creditor). The second arrangement was with La Déroute alone, who agreed to bring trade merchandise to Papillon at the Oto village in return for fifty pounds of powder and other items in a valise Papillon had left in St. Louis. In two consecutive years, Papillon acquired merchandise at the post of the Otos, in the most legal way possible. When La Déroute returned to St. Louis and claimed the gunpowder and the valise, Papillon's arrangements became public knowledge.

Piernas's orders went further than deprivation of merchandise; Chauvin and La Joye should not lend assistance of any kind to traders they found upriver. The party encountered Papillon, and Piernas's harshness mattered little, for he lay dying in April 1774. Chauvin, Lajoye, and their engagé Barsalou helped Papillon through his last days.⁶³ (His illness or injury was not specified.) They did not attend to Papillon's soul by taking down wishes for masses to be said by the priest or for the distribution of personal property, but Chauvin duly penned Papillon's deathbed statement of business accounts, with Lajoye and Barsalou serving as witnesses. The statement began "I, Jean-Baptiste Papillon,⁶⁴ in the presence of Messieurs Chauvin, Barsaloux and La Joy confess and declare to owe in the Illinois in peltry" and continued with a list of his creditors. Papillon confirmed his arrangement with La Déroute: "To Sr. Laderoute (Pierre) on my note the sum of 600 livres in peltry, conditionally

that he should bring me 400 livres of merchandise delivered to the Oto village which he agreed in his note (in exchange) for a valise with clothing which I sold him (and) that is with Mr. Volsey”

The statement went on to reveal the extent of Papillon’s trading arrangements:

I have stored (en cache) in the Pawnee village in the hands of an Indian named La Loupe the following:

- 16 packets of beaver
- A packet of 50 otter and (mixed with) some shaved deerskins
- A packet of deerskins, ditto
- 4 or 5 doe skins
- An empty box

La Loupe also has five horses of mine with their saddles. . .

The man named Vairaitte Jeandro chez les Loup owes me fifteen robes⁶⁵

We certify that Jean-Baptiste Papillon has confessed and declared not to have any other than these mentioned above, at the wintering-site of the Otos, April 8, 1774.

Signed Chauvin, LaJoy, Barsalous
(with his mark)

Lists of debtors and creditors were routinely included in last wills and testaments, but the contents of this one-page document are unusual, particularly in naming an Indian associate and showing the extent of Papillon’s relationships. To conduct trade, to develop and maintain ties in more than one Indian village, Papillon needed a timeline that did not fit his contracts. The opportunities for trade among the Pawnees (or its difficulties) prompted him to negotiate for additional merchandise from traders who were passing through. His deathbed financial statement was properly drawn up before witnesses, and the debts to the St. Louisans that Papillon mentioned therein were honored, including those to La Déroute and Blondin.⁶⁶

After receiving the information from Papillon, Chauvin borrowed a horse (he paid for the loan with a knife, a breechclout, and vermillion) and rode off for the Pawnee village to find the Indian associate La Loupe. He retrieved the furs in storage, compensated La Loupe with eighteen trade hunting knives, (*coutaux bucheron*) and paid him further for transporting the furs on the Platte river (*sur la rivièrre platte*) to the Oto village. The five horses Papillon mentioned probably had transported trade goods upriver, for the Platte was notoriously difficult to ascend.⁶⁷ Chauvin wrote up an itemized account with charges to Papillon’s estate for conveying twelve packets of furs from the Pawnee village to St. Louis, and both Barsalous and Chauvin wrote up charges for their care of the trader during his final illness. Estimators inventoried the bundles of Papillon’s furs at Chauvin’s home and on August 2, 1774, the financial formalities were completed, each creditor receiving his proportionate share and signing acceptance of the distribution.⁶⁸ Papillon’s delay in payment caused problems for his creditors in St. Louis, but because the suppliers had shared the burden of supplying him, no one of them suffered serious financial losses.

Chauvin did not comment on the location of Papillon’s 1774 wintering-site, or his exact death date, but we can entertain the hope that the site and his grave were along the creek that today carries his name. Chauvin took responsibility for Papillon’s burial; whether others were in attendance, and who they were, are likewise unknown.⁶⁹ Jacques Chauvin lived an honorable and long life in St. Louis.⁷⁰ He continued to trade up the Missouri, receiving permission to conduct commerce with the Otos and Pawnees as late as 1799. There can be little doubt that Chauvin provided the name of “Papillion” Creek, his only spelling of the name, for the maps of James McKay and later Lewis and Clark.⁷¹

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In 1778, Auguste Chouteau and his brother-in-law Sylvestre Labbadie received the license for the posts of the Otos and the Pawnees.⁷² Incensed by reports of traders maneuvering merchandise at the Otos’ post, they brought suit against the *bourgeois* of another outfit, Jean-Baptiste Dechêne, and his two engagés who were destined for the Mahas. Chouteau and Labbadie claimed Dechêne had willfully encroached on their license. Lawsuits

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Doit la Succession du feu
 papion a Barsalou 30th Enpelteton
 pour avoir logé nourri et soigné le dit
 papion 2 mois pendant le cours de sa
 maladie jusqu'a son décès. ex. 30th
 a St. Louis le 12 aout 1774.

marque
 Barsalou

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2323

Expresence de M^{rs} Durand et Cambas
 je declare avoir Reçu et donner quite la
 Succession du feu papion de la somme
 de trente livres Enpelteton Si dit a St.
 Louis le 2 aout 1774
 M^{rs} Durand
 marque
 Cambas

Note of Barsalou among the estate papers
 of Jean-Baptiste Papillon. Upon returning to
 St. Louis, Barsalou requested payment for
 providing two months' lodging, food, and care
 during Papillon's illness until his death. The note
 was paid. French and Spanish Archives, no. 2323.
 Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

claiming encroachment were not uncommon at any time, but what was remarkable in this instance was an attestation signed by *fourteen* engagés at “leau qui pleure” (present-day Weeping Water Creek, Nebraska⁷³), the wintering site of Chouteau and Labbadie’s bourgeois. As one, the group of engagés, “all of us French” (*nous tous français*) asserted in their declaration, *sincere et véritable*, the innocence of the defendants: the Otos had prevented Dechêne and his men from ascending farther to the Mahas, and had coerced them to give up some of their goods. The men agreed that this had caused some (but little) damage to Chouteau and Labbadie’s profits. One of the engagés drafted the statement in an extraordinarily neat hand and a sincere approximation of correct legal phrasing, dated October 25, 1778. In view of the testimony in St. Louis and the statement of the gathered engagés, defending their own in actions far out on the rivers, the lieutenant governor (and civil judge) in St. Louis, Fernando de Leyba, dismissed the case, charging Chouteau and Labbadie to pay the court costs.⁷⁴ The seemingly simultaneous gathering of such a large number of traders suggests that wintering sites were not wholly isolated, and that consequences of deceiving creditors were well understood within the tightly-knit world of voyageurs, commerçants, and négociants.

Epilogue

In 1800, as smaller merchants found themselves pushed out of the trade by the decision of lieutenant governor Carlos Dehault Delassus to assign trade to persons he felt worthy, Jacques Chauvin and five other men asked Delassus to reinstate open trade:⁷⁵ “We (the undersigned) are far from claiming the exclusion of this trade; our old men limit themselves to sharing it with our co-citizens, merchants like ourselves. All children of the same father, we desire to participate in his benefits.” They looked nostalgically back to the days of Piernas as commandant—“He distributed the posts equally; each found his account there and felt the good effects of this administration. Some good traders were equipped by the entire commerce. In general, each merchant furnished according to his means, and withdrew his share of the furs in proportion to the funds that he had invested. Thus, the people were happy; the merchant comfortable, and no one was reduced to (feared) poverty.” Carl J. Ekberg has described the *mentalité* of the French-Canadian habitant

in eighteenth-century Illinois-Country villages, where ways of life reflected and reinforced mutual cooperation and interdependence: farming in open fields, *abandonné* (pasturing of animals on the open fields during the winter), commons, and nucleated villages.⁷⁶ Deeply-rooted customs bound villagers to each other, even those who took to the rivers for months each year. More than a simple lament by the passing generation, the petition to Delassus reverberates with sentiments of nearly one century of Illinois-Country community life.

NOTES

¹ French and Spanish Archives (hereafter FSA), Instrument no. 2320, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis (MHS).

² FSA, no. 2323.

³ For the source-based account of the beginnings of St. Louis, see Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon K. Person, “The Making (and Perpetuating) of a Myth: Pierre Laclède and the Founding of St. Louis,” *Missouri Historical Review* 111:2 (January 2017): 87-103, and Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon K. Person, *St. Louis Rising: The French Regime of Louis St. Ange de Bellerive* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

⁴ St. Ange to Ulloa, June 4, 1768, AGI, PC, 187A.

⁵ FSA, no. 2828.

⁶ St. Ange reported the visit of three groups of Sioux in his letter of June 27, 1767, Archivo General de Indias, Papeles de Cuba, legajo 107. (Hereafter AGI, PC)

⁷ O'Reilly placed a “Papiom” on the list of traders banished from New Orleans. Lawrence Kinnaird, *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794: Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the year 1945 Vol. II* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1949) 1:103.

⁸ He is remembered by descendants of his Bienvenu relatives: see Ann Dubuisson, *Dupré, Terrebonne, Fontenot, Garland, Stagg, and Dubuisson* (Knoxville: Tennessee Valley Publishing, 2009).

⁹ Estate inventory for Devin, FSA, nos. 2320 and 2459; for Papiillon, FSA, no 2323.

¹⁰ AGI, PC, 188A for requests from summer 1768.

¹¹ Speech by the Kansa chief, Riu to Ulloa, June 25, 1768, AGI, PC, 109.

¹² AGI, PC, 109, 1117-1125.

¹³ The interpreters were mostly from local families; Louis Deshêtres was the only one on the government payroll.

¹⁴ See census in Ekberg and Person, *St. Louis Rising*, Appendix A. From a distance of a few miles from the southern tip of St. Louis, the entire village of the Peorias came for gifts, and to request that the deaths of their war chief Little Turkey and his son be covered. AGI, PC, 109, 1132v.

¹⁵ Delightfully rendered in Spanish as “Petizo” from the French “Petits O” AGI, PC, 109, 1184.

¹⁶ Account of gifts, AGI, PC, 109, 1118v. The gifts for the Big Osages, Pawnees, and Otos were among the lost pages. This list is also comparable to a British list of Indian gifts in 1766. Clarence Walworth Alvord and Clarence Edwin Carter, eds., *The New Regime, 1765-1767*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society, no. 11 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1916), 391-393.

¹⁷ The new regulations from Ulloa, and St. Louisans’ response, are discussed in Ekberg and Person, *St. Louis Rising*, 82-83.

¹⁸ For his life in St. Louis, see Ekberg and Person, *St. Louis Rising*.

¹⁹ A comprehensive discussion of the complex topic of Skidi Pawnee settlements is in Roger C. Echo-Hawk, “At the Edge of the Desert of Multicolored Turtles: Skidi Pawnee History on the Loup River,” in *The Stabaco Site: a Mid-Eighteenth Century Skidi Pawnee Town on the Loup River*, eds. Steven R. Holen and John K. Peterson (Nebraska Archaeological Survey, 1995) 14-49. Stabaco was known to the French as a chief and a probable village name from the 1750s. Holen and Peterson, “Conclusion,” *Stabaco Site*, 219.

²⁰ FSA, no. 1510.

²¹ *Tapage (Tappage)* was the French name for the Pitahauerat group of Pawnees, Echo-Hawk, “Edge of the Desert,” 17.

²² FSA, no. 1513.

²³ Riu to Ulloa, June 17, 1768, AGI, PC 109, 1099. Inventory of Lacroix dit Marantel, FSA, 2336.

²⁴ Jean-Marie Cardinal, ca. 1731-1780 (birth year calculated from Early Litigations, B.2/f.16, MHS). Panimaha was a band of the Skidi Pawnees. Pawnee village locations along the lower Loup River may account for the French names Papillon used, see below.

²⁵ FSA, no. 2852. Cardinal came with his family to St. Louis to establish residence in the village as late as 1776, and his oldest child was baptized then at age 21. St. Louis Archdiocesan Archives, St. Louis Old Cathedral Registers. Montardy, Boucher, Cardinal, and Pourné each owned at least one Indian slave in the 1770s. Sharon Person, *Standing Up for Indians*, Center for French Colonial Studies Extended Publications, no. 8 (Naperville, IL: Center for French Colonial Studies, 2010). See also Carl J. Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

²⁶ Labuxière’s importance in creating the body of legal records in St. Louis’s first years cannot be overstated.

²⁷ FSA, no. 2854.

²⁸ In 1773, Pourné received permission to trade with the Little Osages, Letter of Pedro Piernas, December 12, 1773, AGI, PC, 81. In 1778, Cardinal had the trade of the Little Osages, Early Litigation Collection, B.1/f.5, MHS. See also A.P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis & Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 72 (hereafter *BLC*).

²⁹ Devin to Ulloa, June 12, 1768, AGI, PC, 188A.

³⁰ *Sacramental Records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Mobile*, vol. 1:290, 312; Jack Jackson, *Flags Along the Coast: Charting the Gulf of Mexico, 1519-1759: A Reappraisal* (The Book Club of Texas, 1995), 60 ff. Valentin père arrived at the Gulf coast in 1719.

³¹ Jacqueline O. Vidrine, *Love’s Legacy: The Mobile Marriages* (Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwest Louisiana), 104-105. Several companies of Swiss troops served the French kings. See William D. Reeves, *De la Barre: Life of a French Creole Family in Louisiana* (Polyanthos, 1980), 30n5.

³² Reeves, *De la Barre*, 36. Superior Council Records, *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXIII, 608.

³³ Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer, C^{13A} 41:103.

³⁴ FSA, no. 2549.

³⁵ *Livres Terriens* 1, fo.11, MHS.

³⁶ Reeves, *De la Barre*, 36.

³⁷ FSA, nos. 1543, 1571 and 1587. In the contracts of 1771 and 1772, Labuxière called Devin a négociant; likely he provided merchandise to others from shipments he received from New Orleans.

³⁸ Marcil had been an engagé of LaFantazie, sent by Labuxière to the Otos in 1768-69. FSA, no. 2854. Witnesses for the contract were Devin and Chauvin, signed June 12, 1768.

³⁹ His personal belongings were separated from the trade merchandise and auctioned separately. FSA, no. 2549.

⁴⁰ Many lists of cargoes dispatched from New Orleans mention only “bales” of trade items, or lists commingled Indian trade items with stores intended for the villagers of St. Louis. Devin’s inventory is singular in the timing and content.

⁴¹ Identified as both *fusils de traite* and the more valuable *Tulle* fusils. Thanks to Don Hamilton for assistance on Tulle fusils, personal communication, April 10, 2017.

⁴² Identified as both hunting knives, *bucherones*, and double-edged *siamoises*.

⁴³ Frank Norall, *Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 71.

⁴⁴ Two essential works for identifications in this paragraph were Robert S. DuPlessis *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce and Colonisation in the Atlantic World, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) and Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ More on Hervieux, Dodier, and Baram in Ekberg and Person, *St. Louis Rising*.

⁴⁶ On the presence of Lower Louisiana pipestones in Pawnee villages, see Daniel R. Watson, “Euroamerican Trade Material and Related Items,” in Holen and Peterson, *Stabaco*, 192.

⁴⁷ *BLC*, 78.

⁴⁸ In later litigation cases, see elsewhere, the term *commerçant* was replaced by *commis* or *bourgeois*.

⁴⁹ See Abraham P. Nasatir, "Ducharme's Invasion of Missouri: An Incident in the Anglo-Spanish Rivalry for the Indian Trade of Upper Louisiana" *Missouri Historical Review* 24 (April 1930).

⁵⁰ Kinnaird, *SM* V 1:219-220. On LaJoye, see Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon Person, "The 1767 Dufossat Maps of St. Louis: Who was 'the Joyful One'?" *Gateway* 2012.

⁵¹ Rob Bozell, Associate Director/State Archeologist, Nebraska State Historical Society, suggests the Yutan or Woodcliff sites. Personal communication, July 31, 2017. See also John R. Bozell, "History and Archeology of the Lower Platte and Central Missouri River Valleys, 1600-1800," in *The Eagle Ridge Site and Early Eighteenth Century Indian-European Relations in Eastern Nebraska*, Gayle F. Carlson and John R. Bozell, eds., *Central Plains Archeology* 12:1 (2010): 7-17.

⁵² On Chamard, see Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve* (Gerald, MO: Patrice Press, 1985); FSA, no. 2323; the debt was settled from Papillon's estate. Chamard's request for trade is in AGI, PC, 188A.

⁵³ FSA, no. 1541. The house was a common size in St. Louis, 25 x 20 pieds (one pied=12.7 inches). Papillon specified that the outer posts should be cedar, and the interior covered above and below in cottonwood, with a stone chimney in one of the gables.

⁵⁴ Tousignan's 1773 estate inventory (FSA, no. 2314) listed one *robe matachée*, suggesting that the debt may have been paid.

⁵⁵ FSA, no. 1550. Sarpy's itemized statement for 921 livres from August 1770, including building materials and trade goods, is part of FSA, no. 2323. The painted buffalo robes are mentioned in a note in the same instrument.

⁵⁶ FSA, no. 1553.

⁵⁷ FSA, no. 2323.

⁵⁸ The best-known example of a painted robe is discussed in Morris S. Arnold *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 63-76.

⁵⁹ White, *Wild Frenchmen*, 46.

⁶⁰ Pierre Blondin fathered a child, Elizabeth, born in October 1771 (baptized January 1772) to a "sauvagesse infidelle." In April 1774, the Indian wife of Sieur Blondin was buried, having received the sacraments. St. Louis Archdiocesan Archives, Old Cathedral Sacramental Registers. No fur trade contracts for Blondin could be found in the archives.

⁶¹ Lamy's name appears many times in St. Louis notarial and sacramental records. He married Celeste Thérèse Barrois, daughter of long-time Illinois Country royal notary Joseph Bertlot Barrois.

⁶² Rob Bozell suggests either Linwood (on the south bank of the Platte) or the Barcal site. Personal communication, July 31, 2017.

⁶³ Barsalous (either Gerard or Nicolas) charged the estate for two months of care. FSA, 2323.

⁶⁴ Chauvin consistently spelled his name this way; other writers used variations. Labuxière always wrote "Papillon."

⁶⁵ Was Chauvin distinguishing the man named *La Loupe* from the group of Pawnees called the *Loup*? No name close to "Jeandro," except perhaps "Gendron," has been found in St. Louis records.

⁶⁶ In contrast, in 1778, the commandant at Arkansas Post published an ordinance that "rendered null and void any notes, conveyances of goods, obligations, or bills of sale executed on the river between hunters..." Arnold, *Rumble*, 51.

⁶⁷ *BLC*, 489, McKay's "Table of Distances" from 1797.

⁶⁸ FSA, no. 2323.

⁶⁹ The Otos are believed to have settled at the Yutan site, about 34 miles from the mouth of the Platte, in the 1770s, but may have lived at the Woodcliff village in the 1760s and early 1770s. Bozell, "History and Archeology," 13, and personal communication July 31, 2017.

⁷⁰ The 1787 census of St. Louis (Census Collection, MHS) enumerated Don Santiago Chauvin, *comerciante*, age 45, his wife Maria Luisa (Marie-Louise Tayon) 36, and four children, the eldest 13. See also *BLC*, 592, 629 (called "a very honorable man" by Delassus: *BLC*, 644).

⁷¹ "passed the mouth of Papillion or Butter fly Creek..." William Clark, July 21, 1804; <https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/item/lc.jrn.1804-07-21#lc.jrn.1804-07-21.02>

⁷² Early Litigation Collection, B.1/f. 11, MHS. Labbadie had married Chouteau's sister in 1776. The online English translation of the engagés' note contains some inaccuracies.

⁷³ The French wintering site was perhaps not the same as the Otos' site—a 1779 case described Weeping Water as one day's ride from the Otos' village. Early Litigation collection, B.2/f.16, MHS.

⁷⁴ Early Litigation Collection, B.1/f. 11, MHS.

⁷⁵ *BLC*, 624-626. This petition was to protest Jacques Clamorgan's exclusive privileges.

⁷⁶ Carl J. Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).