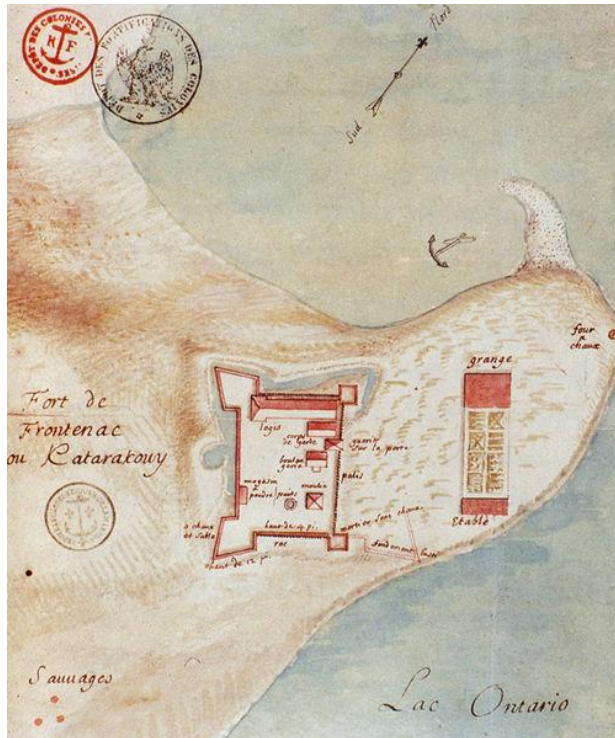


The 1706 “*Conseil de Guerre [Court-Martial] of Savoyard, soldat de la compagnie du Muy au Canada*” at Fort Frontenac
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I love finding documents that show us real people from the past responding to real situations in their own words. In 2002 and 2003, as part of my series of articles about “The Other Women”¹ at Fort Pontchartrain in the founding years, I mentioned a confrontation that had broken out at Fort Frontenac in 1706. It resulted in the death of a soldier from the large convoy of 1706 that had just begun its journey to *Le Détroit*. My source then was the colonial correspondence. When my articles were written, I had not located the *Conseil de guerre / court-martial* that took place at Fort Frontenac to reach a verdict about the cause of the death. Some years later, however, looking for something else, I typed the words “soldat 1706” into the search engine at Library and Archives Canada. Voila! Up popped a document given the title “*Savoyard soldat de la compagnie du Muy au Canada*.”² The translation that follows standardizes some names and uses my punctuation and paragraphing. Words in italics are as written.



Fort Frontenac at Cataract, 1685 [today Kingston, Ontario]

The *grange* in the upper right is the barn mentioned in the text. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Frontenac

Today five July at three hours after noon, we **Louis Fournier Escuier S.^r du Figuier**, Enseign in the *troupes de la marine du Canada*, serving the function of Major in the detachment created for **Fort Ponchartrain du Détroit du Lac Érié**, having heard a loud noise near **Fort de Frontenac** in a barn, we took ourselves there; and, having arrived, we found several persons assembled who told us that the man named **Savoyard [Jean Barthody dit Savoyard]**,³ soldier of the company of **Dumuy**, being of the said

¹ See Suzanne Boivin Sommerville, “The Other Women, Part 3: Brides of Soldiers,” *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (July 2002): 137-144, and “The Other Women and Early Detroit, Part 4: Brides and Soldiers who Deserted,” *MHH*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (Jan. 2003): 27-37.

² Library and Archives Canada, Série E. Dossiers personnels, formerly série C7 du Fonds de la Marine. Online MIKAN no. 3054506 (13 items) www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

³ *Le nommé Savoyard*: The man named Savoyard is **Jean Barthody dit Savoyard**. He had married **Marie Poirier dite Langevin** 12 April 1706 at Québec City. See my articles. **Dumuy** is Nicolas Daneau de Muy.

detachment, had just been killed by the man named *St. Jean* [**André Serré dit St. Jean**],⁴ soldier of the company of *de la motte cadillac* [**Antoine Laumet dit de Lamothe Cadillac**]. We entered the said barn, and we saw that the said Savoyard truly had been killed by a gun loaded with shot from which he had the throat⁵ pierced from one side to the other.⁶ Having seen this, we exited and also went into the field,⁷ giving notice to *Mr de La motte capitaine et Commandant* of the said detachment for the garrison of the said Fort Pontchartrain where he commands for his majesty, [who] gave us an order at that moment to assemble a detachment of soldiers to find and to arrest the said St. Jean who had committed the murder and who had taken flight into the woods with his gun, which was promptly done by us; and then he gave us orders to investigate⁸ how this action had come about, for which we [end page 1] proceeded in the following manner:

Today at four hours after noon appeared the man named *Montmidy*, sergeant of the company of *Desgl* [ink blot] of the garrison at Fort Frontenac, for whom we had sent *La Fleur Dor*, sergeant of the company of *La Forest*; who, after swearing to tell and depose the truth, having been asked his name, surname, age, status, and residence; whether he is related to, allied with, or a servant of one or the other of the parties, he said that he is named *Martin Chemy*, forty-four years old, serving in the garrison of Fort Frontenac as a sergeant; after which we had read to him the report contained in the said investigation, who [the deponent] said he knew and had seen and heard that the man named Savoyard had threatened the said St. Jean by putting his saber in his [St. Jean's] face, saying that he would cut his face; and, as for his wife, that he would cut her nose, and that Savoyard uttered strong insults,⁹ at which the said St. Jean replied that he was not afraid of him and that they would be an even match,¹⁰ who [the one deposing, Martin Chemy dit Montmidy] signed having declared knowing how to write.

[signed] *Montmidy*

Dufiguier

ficquet secretaire

Today at four and a half hours after noon appeared the man named *francois le ber*, whom we had sent for by *La Fleur Dor*, sergeant in the company [end page 2] of *La Forest*, who, after swearing to tell and depose the truth, having been asked his name, surname, age, status, and residence; whether he is related to, allied with, or a servant of one or the other of the parties, he said his name is *Francois le Bert* [*sic*], inhabitant of *Laprairie de la Magdelaine*, thirty-three years old, and that he is neither related to nor allied nor a servant of either party, after which we read him the contents of the said investigation.¹¹

Le Ber said he understood and had seen and heard in the barn where he was that *Mr. de Bragelonne*, ensign of the troops of the marine in garrison at Fort Frontenac, having told the said Savoyard that if he knew that it was he [Savoyard] who had injured¹² his female dog¹³ that he would hold him responsible for it; upon which Savoyard replied that he hadn't touched the dog; upon which the said *S^r de Bragelonne* departed; and, after the said *S^r de Bragelonne* had left, the said Savoyard commented that if the *S^r de Bragelonne* had hit him then, he would have picked up his saber and that he would have run him through

⁴ **André Serré dit St. Jean**, soldat de Lamothe, married **Marie Anne Boilard** 26 April 1706 at Québec City.

⁵ [*le gosier*]

⁶ [*d'outré en outre*]

⁷ [*sur le champ*]

⁸ [*d'informer*]

⁹ [*injures*]

¹⁰ [*et qu'ils seroient deux, as in « Être à deux (et non pas à droit) de jeu: n'avoir point d'avantage l'un sur l'autre»*, neither man would have an advantage over the other. *Jean-François Féraud: Dictionnaire critique de la langue française (1787-88)*]

¹¹ [*information*]

¹² [*estropié*]

¹³ [*sa chienne*]

with it,¹⁴ uttering several insults; and having been asked whether he [Le Ber] knew how to read and write, he said yes and signed
[signed] *françois LeBer*
Dufiguier ficquet secretaire

Today at five hours after noon appeared the man named *perigort*, soldier in the company of Dumuy, whom we had sent for by *la fleur dor* [end page 3], sergeant of the company of *La Forest*, who after having sworn to tell and depose the truth, having been asked his name, surname, age, status, and residence, whether he is related to, allied with, or a servant of one or the other of the parties said that his name is *françois Marquéz* [**François Marguet dit Perigord**],¹⁵ thirty-five years of age, soldier in the company of Dumuy, and that he is neither related to nor allied nor a servant of one or the other party; after which we read him the contents of the said investigation, who said he knew and had seen and understood that the said St. Jean had declared that the said Savoyard enticed him to drink the brandy¹⁶ of the said Perigord; upon which the said Savoyard told the wife of the said Perigord [**Marie Louise Galarneau**], who retold it to her husband, who replied that he [Perigord] had thought he was dealing with honest fellows but that he was dealing with rascals;¹⁷ after which the argument did not go any further because, not long after, the wife of the said Savoyard [**Marie Poirier dite Langevin**] said to him [Perigord] that it was her husband who had egged them on to drink the brandy of the said Perigord, as St. Jean had said. At which the said *Savoyard* grossly insulted the wife of St. Jean [**Marie Anne Boilard**], calling her a common prostitute,¹⁸ threatening to cut off her nose. The said St. Jean, arriving in the barn just as this was happening, demanded to know what was going on. The said Savoyard replied to him that he was a base commoner,¹⁹ that he would cut off [end page 4] his head, but the said St. Jean did not say as much to him.²⁰ As soon as Savoyard stood up and took his saber, his wife tried to stop him. He gave her a kick with his foot that threw her on the ground; and, at the same time, the said Savoyard ran toward the said St. Jean with his saber in his hand in order to strike him on the neck; at which the said St. Jean grabbed his gun and fired, the which shot hit Savoyard in the neck; and the said Perigord having been asked whether he knew how to read and write, he declared he did not know how.

[signed] + [a cross]
[signed] *Dufiguier*
ficquet secretaire

Today at five and a half hours after noon appeared the man named *desloge*, soldier of the company of *lorimier* whom we sent for by *la fleur dor*, sergeant of the company of *la forest*, who, after swearing to tell and depose the truth, having been asked his name, surname, age, status, and residence; whether he is related to, allied with, or a servant of one or the other of the parties, he said that his name is *iacque* [*sic*, Jacques] *desloge*, soldier in the Company of *lorimier*, twenty-two years old, presently in the garrison at Fort Frontenac, and that he is neither related to nor allied nor a servant of either of the parties [end page 5], after which we read him the contents of the said investigation, who replied that he had seen and heard the said Savoyard menacing the said St. Jean several times, saying that he would give him twenty hits of his [Savoyard's] saber and calling the wife of the said St. Jean a prostitute and commoner,²¹ and the said St. Jean had suffered several times a number of brutal assaults²² without responding to him [Savoyard]

¹⁴ [*sabré*, verb form of *sabre*]

¹⁵ **François Marguet dit Perigord** married **Marie Louise Galarneau** 24 April 1706 at Québec City.

¹⁶ [*leau devie* (*sic*)]

¹⁷ [*frippons*, dishonorable men]

¹⁸ [*bourge de putain*] The cutting off of a woman's nose was a penalty for prostitution.

¹⁹ [*un bourge*, base, one with no class, vulgar, possibly related to *bougre*, unnatural]

²⁰ [*luy dit pas tant*, was not provoked to reply to the insult]

²¹ [*bourgesse*]

²² [*duretez*]

with the slightest word; and asked whether the said *desloge* knew how to read and write, he declared he could not sign.

[signed] *Dufiguier* *ficquet secretaire* [end page 6]

Today the 7th of July, 1706, a court-martial was assembled in the tent of *m.^r de La motte Cadillac* in the camp near Fort Frontenac, commandant for the king of Fort Pontchartrain of Detroit. *S.^r dufiguier*, performing the functions of major in the said camp, brought to the said court-martial the investigation conducted against the man named St. Jean, soldier of the said detachment, regarding his murder of the man named Savoyard, also soldier in the said detachment.

The said *S.^r dufiguier* reported at the same time to the said court-martial that the said St. Jean, who had saved himself by going into the woods, had addressed the sentinel and that he had asked him to be permitted to re-enter the camp and that he was allowed to do so. He, *S.^r dufiguier*, having consigned him to the military police,²³ the said St. Jean demanded pardon because he had not been at fault.²⁴

The court-martial, on the basis of the report made by the said *S.^r dufiguier* and after having heard the reading of the said investigation, ordered that the said St. Jean would be sworn in and interrogated on the facts and the specifics of the case, and that he would be conducted [end page 7] immediately into the tent of *M.^r de la motte Cadillac* to undergo the said interrogation.

The said St. Jean, having been brought by four Musketeers and one sergeant, was interrogated as follows after having sworn in ordinary form: Asked where the said St. Jean had been on the fifth of this month before he killed the man named Savoyard; replied that he had been occupied in mending his canoe. Asked his name, surname, age, and what place he was from; replied that he is named *andre sere* [ink blot] *dit s.^r jean*, twenty-one years old, from the city of *Lavours* in Languedoc. Asked whether he knew the officers who make up the court-martial and whether he has any reason to recuse any of them [invalidate their testimony], he said that he knew all of them and that he recuses none. Asked whether he had a certain quarrel with the said Savoyard before killing him; replied that at Montreal the said Savoyard challenged him to a duel and that he did not want to go to the place of the duel. Asked whether this had any result en [end page 8] route;²⁵ replied, no. Asked why and for what reason he had to kill the said Savoyard; replied that he did not have this intention, that being at work mending his canoe with the man named *parisien* [**Pierre Leger dit Parisien**], soldier, who is his brother-in-law,²⁶ he heard the said Savoyard calling his wife a commoner and prostitute; and, believing that this would be over soon, he did not want to go there, keeping his cool.²⁷ And, the noise having ended, the said *Parisien* told him to go to get a firebrand to patch their canoe,²⁸ which he did; and, when he had entered into the barn, the said Savoyard wanted to assault him. The wife of the said Savoyard wishing to prevent this, her husband threw her down and seized his own saber, which he waved about wildly, coming at him to kill him; and, not seeing anything around to use to defend himself, he [St. Jean] took hold of his gun to shove away the said Savoyard with its butt, which gun went off all of a sudden without St. Jean touching the trigger.²⁹ Since he does not know how this could possibly have happened, it must [end page 9] have been the devil that did it because, as for him [St. Jean], he had no other intention than to block the blows that were being inflicted by the said Savoyard. Asked why he fled into the woods since he believes himself innocent; replied that fear made him do it. Asked why he returned to the camp; replied that, not feeling responsible, he hoped that

²³ [*Corps de garde*]

²⁴ [guilty, *coupable*]

²⁵ [*en chemin*, as they traveled to Fort Frontenac]

²⁶ **Pierre Leger dit Parisien**. He married **Jeanne Boislard** 15 May 1706 at Québec City.

²⁷ [*preignant patience*; in today's language, keeping his cool seems right]

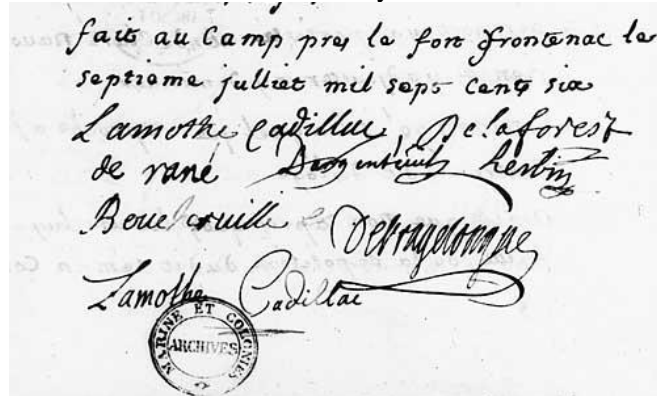
²⁸ [*un tisson de feu pour Gommer leur canot*]

²⁹ [*la gachette*]

he would not be made to die. Asked whom he asked to enter the camp; replied that it was the sentinel who reported to *Sieur Dufiguier*, major of the said camp. Asked whether he has any reproaches [challenges to the testimony] to make against Montmidy, sergeant of the garrison of Fort Frontenac, to call him back [for more testimony] and confront him; replied, no; and immediately a reading was made to the said St. Jean of the deposition of the said witness. [end page 10] The said Montmidy persisted and declared having nothing to add or subtract; and the said St. Jean replied he had nothing to say against the said deposition. Asked whether he has any reproaches to make against the man named Francois Leber, inhabitant of *la prairie de la magdelaine*; replied that he does not know him; after which a reading was made to the said St. Jean of the deposition of the said witness, about which he declared having nothing to say, and the said witness persisted and declared having nothing to add or subtract. Asked whether he has any reproach to make against the man named Perigord, soldier of the said detachment; replied, no; after which a reading was made to him of the deposition of the said witness, about which he did not find anything to say, and the said Perigord persisted and declared having nothing to add or subtract. Asked whether he has any reproach to make against the said Desloge; replied, no, after which a reading was made to him of the deposition of the said witness, about [end page 11] which he did not find anything to say, and the said *desloge* persisted and declared having nothing to add or subtract.

This day seven July before noon, the court-martial assembled in the camp near Fort Frontenac, ready to depart for *le detroit* with all of the detachment after having seen and examined the investigation conducted by *Sr. Dufiguier* performing the functions of major in the said detachment, the interrogation, the recall of witnesses,³⁰ and the confrontations of the witnesses. The said St. Jean was sent absolved of guilt under the good pleasure of his majesty and [it was] ordered that the said St. Jean would serve at *fort pontchartrain du detroit du lac Errié*, from which he will not be permitted to leave until his majesty will have given his orders to his subjects.³¹

Made at the camp near Fort Frontenac the seventh of July seventeen hundred six



fait au Camp pres la fort Frontenac le
septieme juillet mil sept cent six
Lamothe Cadillac De laforest
de rané Dargenteuil herbin
Bouedeville debragelongue
Lamothe Cadillac

Lamothe Cadillac *De laforest*
de rané *Dargenteuil* *herbin*
Bouedeville *debragelongue*
Lamothe Cadillac [a son of Cadillac, probably Antoine, an enseign] [end p. 12]

³⁰ [recollement]

³¹ A letter of the following year reports that his majesty approved the results of a *conseil de guerre* at Québec and the one held at Fort Frontenac but adds: “this *conseil* had no right to pardon [*d’absoudre*] a man who has killed. It is to the King that the right to pardon belongs.” “Le Ministre à M. De Vaudreuil (30 juin 1707),” RAPQ CD-Rom version, p. 373. See my “Other Women,” Part 4, cited above, for the court-martial at Québec City.