

The Excommunication of Louis de Gonzague Deshêtres *dit* Pigeon and Louise Beaulieu
Loraine M. DiCerbo, FCHSM Member (lorainedicerbo@yahoo.com)

Because this is my first submission to *Michigan's Habitant Heritage*, I would like to start with a little background about my genealogical experiences. I have felt the curious pull of the undiscovered knowledge about my family since I was first asked in my fifth grade class to write out my family tree. After talking to all my close family members and completing the assignment, I found myself unable to complete more than three generations. Although I found this unacceptable, as a child, I had no knowledge of genealogical techniques or the financial means to research my family history. Seven years ago, after entering the age of Computer Genealogy, I found myself wanting my children to have a much more complete family tree to present to their classrooms than I had for mine. By this time, I had been a Research Assistant at Wayne State University for six years, and I had much more knowledge about how to proceed. Research for me has never been just a job or a hobby, but a life pursuit as well as a pursuit of past life. I told myself I was only doing direct lineage, but as any good genealogist knows, the complete data for direct lineage often lies in the sidelines, and my nature is too meticulous to leave blank spaces in my database.

When I first began researching my paternal grandmother's line, I asked her for any known information on her lineage. She gave me four clues. The first one was that the family "had been in the area for a very long time". The second was that they thought there was Indian blood in their line. The third was that her mother was "French-German". The fourth clue was two surnames, **Miller** and **Keidel**, which are both German in origin.

It took only six months of research for me to become thoroughly engrossed in genealogy, and it was the result of one document. The marriage certificate of my second great-grandparents, **August Miller** and **Julianna Keidel** had listed the names of my third great-grandparents as **Christ Keidel** and **Jane Blay**. Finally, I had my French connection! But I still did not know the treasure I had uncovered until I stumbled upon Father Denissen's *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region 1701-1936 Revision*. For as many mistakes that are present in his volumes, they are still a wealth of information for the beginner.

It was in Father Denissen's volumes where I first came upon my relation to the **Deshêtres** family. I am a descendant of **Louis de Gonzague Deshêtres** and **Louise Beaulieu**, through their son **Louis**, born August 19, 1774.¹ Anyone who has researched the Deshêtres line knows that it is not an easy one to trace, and that there is much data missing on this line. The blank fields made me even more determined to search all of the lines of this family until they were all filled. The Act of the Excommunication of Louis de *Gonsague* and of Louise Beaulieu has helped to fill in one of the blanks.

The following document is taken in full from the handwritten transcription in *Ste. Anne's Church Register*, 1704-1841, Volume 1, pages 849-852.²

Excommunication of Louis de Gonsague [*sic*] and of Louise Beaulieu

Louis de Gonzague Dehestre, *dit* Pigeon, and Louise

¹ Rev. Fr. Christian Denissen. *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region Revision 1701 – 1936*. Detroit, Michigan: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987. Vol. 1, p. 351. FHL film #1312030-Assomption Sandwich.

² The full original version of this excommunication can be found in the Burton Historical Collection in the Detroit Public Library on microfilm #1252, reel #1 – the register of Sainte-Anne-de-Détroit.

Beaulieu, wife of Jean Breche *dit* Labatterie,³ soldier in the Regiment of Rousillon, previously part of the garrison at Boucherville in the time of the French, having become, by a number of feigned repentances and constant falling back [into error], a subject of scandal and horror to two parishes, and especially in Notre Dame de l'Assomption on the Coste du Sud [South shore] where they presently live, we would betray our ministry and we would render it without dignity, if we deferred any longer from using our authority conferred on us to punish them, one and the other, public and stubborn adulterers [...] Louise [end 849] Beaulieu, wife of Labatrie [*sic*] began, on her arrival in this country, to present [herself as] an imposter, in saying she was a widow, and this in order to better

enter into the role, and to be able to remarry without punishment although she was not ignorant that her husband was still alive; seeing herself discovered in her lie, she went on to a calumny even blacker and most gross. She accused her husband of having been married in France before he came to Canada and even of having children from his first marriage [;] she added in order to support her cause that he himself had confessed this to her before leaving for France. She cited witnesses to us, who, she told us, swore [to this] in Canada and in Boucherville, where she was born [*sic*] and was married to the said Labatterie and had full knowledge of it, and confirmed for her that it is for this [reason] that her husband did not want to take her to Coulouvre, place of his residence

On the basis of her testimony [*parole*], we have Written about [the situation] to *Monseigneur*, our bishop, and also to *Messieurs de Montgolfier* and *Marchand*, one and the other, vicars general of his Grace, and whose responses [to us] uncovered the falsehoods [...] She did not wait for their responses [;] nine days after our letters were sent, Louis de Gonzague Dehestre and she went to the Church of Notre Dame de l'Assomption and publicly married [each other] *a la gamine* [*sic*]. Reverend Father Potier and we, rightly indignant at such a scandalous effrontery and one so contrary to the holy laws of the Church and the State, believed, ourselves, that while waiting for orders from the *prélat* [ecclesiastical dignitary], we should, at least, forbid them to enter our churches, which we did, the day of the Most Holy Trinity, which we did [*sic*], one and the other [both of us] at our parish Masses. On the next day, Monday, they came one and the other, to throw themselves on their knees [before] this holy, religious [man], [with] humiliations most profound, tears on [their] most somber faces, promises

³ Jean Barege (Borege, Baretja) *dit* Labatterie; soldier of Ducros in 1749; *anspessade* in the same company in 1756; corporal of Ducros in 1761; grenadier of Estor on 4 November 1761; born about 1732; from Couillouvre [*sic*] [Coullioure, Pyrénées-Orientales, Roussillon, diocese and jurisdiction of Perpignan. He was hired on 15 December 1746. [Suzanne Galaise <http://www.colba.net/~vallee/Royal%20Roussillon.html>] [Below from Archives nationales du Québec, Série X, Xb carton 68 régiment de Royal Roussillon: embarquement Brest mars 1756.]

Handwritten signature: Jean Barege J. La Batterie accompagné. 24 - 5 - 4 -

most solemn, everything on their part was employed to touch his charity and to obtain pardon [*Misericorde*]. He gave it to them because he believed them to be sincere, and he had every reason to believe them; they came the next day, Tuesday, to the church, during Mass, each of them a candle in hand, [with] all the marks, all the exterior marks of a sincere repentance, an edifying [example] to the faithful who had come in a crowd to be witnesses of such a consoling sight; the Reverend Father absolved them and permitted them to enter his church.

Possessed as I am with respect for the virtue of this holy religious, I believed I had to imitate his charity and to allow, on his example, their entrance to ours [our church]. If I am to believe persons of probity, from that very night, they themselves repented the sorrow of the morning [;] they nevertheless hid [their relationship] for awhile. They avoided creating scandal; during this time, we received the orders from the *prêlat* and also the responses of *Sieurs* Montgolfier and Marchand, one and the other, grand vicaires of His Grace [;] I crossed the river, I myself, to signify to Dehestre the orders of the *prêlat* [;] she [Louise] learned what I had said to her accomplice, she came to meet me at the Reverend Father Potier's, [with] new tears, new promises, Reverend Father and I talked to her, with all the firmness required by our ministry, we again believed her, this time, to be sincere, but about a month later, victims for a long time of their infamous passion, one and the other, they lifted the mask, [living in the] same house, same bed, everything in common and believing they had nothing more to fear [;] during this time, I was obliged by order of His Highness, our religious *prêlat*, to proceed publicly against Charles Morand *dit* Grimard and Marie Françoise Meny, wife of Jean Billou *dit* Patoka,⁴ guilty of the same crime; from the first public notice [*sommation*] we made to the said Grimard and his accomplice, the above said Louis de Gonzague Deshetre and Josette [*sic*] Beaulieu, his accomplice, were terrified, they feared for themselves, they came to see us. New sorrow, new promises, they even offered to guarantee their repentance by oaths [*serments*] most solemn, we did not believe [we should] receive their oaths in the fear that a new backsliding [*rechute*] would seal their reprobation but fearing we might rely too much on their sorrow, we ordered them definitively to separate, saying to them that in case of recidivism without any new order, or public condemnation or any other warning whatsoever, we would proceed in justice to their condemnation, with more severity, as their so frequent backslidings made them unworthy of all pity. They obeyed, they separated, we were flattered that this time their conversion was sincere and nevertheless [,] during this time in which they approached the sacraments, we have reason to believe that sacrileges were added to their other crimes! [*sic*] By the time we were thinking less frequently of them, a new witness to their adultery showed himself and made [himself] heard

In the fear that some accident might happen to the mother, we believed we had to wait until she was recovered from giving birth [*ses couches*], but today since she is entirely recovered, we would render ourselves unworthy of our ministry that we have been conferred, and in some way in complicity with their crime, as much

⁴ Jean Billiau *dit* Lespérance [Denissen, Vol. 1, pp. 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745]

by our silence, and the appearance of their impunity [;] we would be giving occasion [of sin] to a number of others to imitate them [if we did not act]
 It is time to avenge the Divine *Misericorde* [end 851]
 for all of the injuries and outrages they did to Him. By uniting ourselves to Divine Justice for their punishment, for these reasons and in conformity to the orders that we have received from the illustrious and Most Reverend *Monseigneur* Jean Olivier Brillan [*sic*], our illustrious bishop, we have excommunicated them in public during the announcements [*au prône*] of our parish Mass, this day two October and delivered [them] publicly to all the power of this same demon because of whom they preferred slavery to the sweet liberty of the children of God.

We have also forbidden all the faithful of one and the other sex [to commit a similar crime], and this on pain of also being punished equally and to run the risk of excommunication called for by the Holy Canons and the leaders of the diocese. May Heaven cause this punishment to convert and preserve the rest of our parishioners from the effects of this contagion

At Detroit, this 2nd October 1774

[signed] f simple Bocquet, Rev. miss. Curé et vic. Général

(Translated and transcribed by Suzanne Boivin Sommerville from a copy of a transcribed version of the registers of Sainte-Anne de Detroit given me by Loraine DiCerbo, December 2005. Punctuation has been added for clarity. Line endings are as on the transcription Loraine gave me. I have checked the original version from the registers of Sainte-Anne-de-Détoit, and I see no serious differences between the original and the transcription I originally used.)

Based on the date of the document, we know the child mentioned in this document, the “new witness to their adultery [who] showed himself and made [himself] heard,” was Louis de Gonzague Deshêtres, born August 19, 1774. His arrival showed that they had not been truthful, but deceptive, finally culminating in the Excommunication once Louise recovered from childbirth, six weeks after delivery.

L'an de N: S: mil sept cent soixante et quatorze, le 19 d'août,
 j: s: Soubigné, prêtre, Mission: de la Compagnie de Jesus, faisant les
 fonctions Curiales dans l'église de l'Assomption de la pointe de Montreuil
 du Detroit, Certifie avoir baptisé Louis de gonzague ne d'aujourd'hui
 fils de Louis Deshetres et de Marie Louise Beaulieu son père et mère
 en mariage illegitime: Les parrain a été Pierre L'etourneau et
 La marraine Marie Louise Parent etc.
 Pi: potier j: M:

[In the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred seventy-four, on the 19th of August, I, the undersigned missionary priest of *la compagnie de Jesus* [Jesuites], performing the priestly functions in the church of *L'assomption de la pointe de Montreal du Detroit*, certify having baptized Louis de gonzague, born today, son of Louis deshetres and of Marie Louise beaulieu, his father and mother in an illegitimate marriage. The godfather was Pierre L'etourneau and the godmother, Marie Louise parent etc.

pi potier j: M:]

Note that Father Potier calls this child the issue of an illegitimate marriage. Suzanne Sommerville explains:

Before the birth of this child, as Father Bocquet documents, Louis and Louise had married at l'Assomption *a la gamine* [*sic*], or, more accurately spelled, *à la Gaumine*. Father Potier identifies the child as the product of an illegitimate marriage, not as a bastard. Although Louis

and Louise had spoken their vows before witnesses, they had not received the official approval of the Church. Approval could not be given in this case. The ruling had come down that Louise was still the wife of Jean Barege *dit* Labatterie.

The Holy Roman Catholic Church acknowledges that a man and a woman marry each other. The priest does not “marry” them. He, and the others present, witness the exchange of vows. Because this is true, a tradition developed, begun, some say in Old France, by a man named Gaumin. Parents, important relatives, or even officials sometimes disapproved of a proposed union between a man and a woman, so couples began to meet in church during a Mass. There, before God, the priest, and the witnesses assembled, they would take each other as husband and wife. Church officials acknowledged the validity of the exchange, but practical matters – such as inheritance laws and the legitimacy of any offspring born of the union – required a formal record of the union. By 1715, those who did not obtain this “rehabilitation” of the marriage were threatened with excommunication.

The registers of New France contain several examples of marriages that were later rehabilitated and blessed by the Church, and, also, some that were not. Sometimes the marriages had occurred at distant locations where a priest was not available to bless the union; sometimes they were resorted to because of opposition to the union. When a marriage was rehabilitated, any children born of the marriage were formally given legitimate status.⁵

After the excommunication, there is a two-year period in which Louis is not found. He seems to have left the area. He reappeared in Montreal on June 17, 1776, when he married Marie Françoise Fortier, the widow of Louis Delaunay, and the daughter of Narcisse Guillaume François Fortier and Suzanne Marie Jarry.⁶ Louis was listed as age 43, and his origin was listed as Ste. Anne du Detroit. He was also listed as single, according to PRDH. The couple had three children together - Marie Geneviève, born November 25, 1776;⁷ Louis Antoine, born May 26, 1778;⁸ and Jérôme, born February 28, 1780.⁹ After Marie Françoise died in Montréal on August 12, 1795, Louis remained a widower for a little over one year. During this time, Louis attended the marriage of his stepson, Joseph Delaulnay (sic) [Delaunay] in Montréal on October 28, 1799.¹⁰ Louis remarried again by special license to Marie Josephe Proulx *dite* Clément on June 28, 1796 in Montreal;¹¹ his marital status was not listed. His place of residence was

⁵ Personal E-mail from Suzanne B. Sommerville, 19 March 2006. She adds: “See Father John L. Sullivan, writing for *Késsinnimek – Roots – Racines* in February 2003 under the *nom de plume* Father Owen Taggart. He discussed the Canon Law basis for marriage *à la gaumine* in connection with the union of Jean Desnoyers and Thérèse Ménard, a marriage originally contracted *à la gaumine* ‘after the death of Jean Deniau [Thérèse’s first husband] on 3 November 1708, and before the birth of Pierre Desnoyers, eldest child of Jean Desnoyers and Thérèse Ménard, on 28 August 1710. Before their marriage was “rehabilitated” in 1724, the couple had become parents of seven children.’ [Citing PRDH Marriage #99561, my emphasis.] See also André Lachance, *Vivre, aimer et mourir en Nouvelle-France, La Vie quotidienne aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 2000, pp. 84 – 86, for Antoine Boyer *dit* Lafrance and Catherine Gladu *dite* Lapoitevine in 1715; and Jean Baptiste Joubert and Geneviève Gendron in 1740. Peter Moogk, in his *La Nouvelle-France, The Making of French Canada – a Cultural History*, Michigan State University Press, 2000, pp. 248 – 250, documents several marriages *à la gaumine*, but he views them from his characteristic, biased perspective. Frankly, I prefer the explanation of a scholar of Canon Law, like Father Sullivan. According to the correct interpretation, a valid marriage must eventually take place ‘with a priest as a qualified witness to the exchange of consent between the parties’.” See also, Késsinnimek, *Roots, Racines* for April 2006 for the article by Jean Quintal on *Mariage à la gaumine*. <http://www.veillee.net/>

⁶ PRDH Marriage Record #213492.

⁷ PRDH Baptismal Record #616642.

⁸ PRDH Baptismal Record #617195.

⁹ PRDH Baptismal Record #620097.

¹⁰ PRDH Marriage Record #343501.

¹¹ PRDH Marriage Record #348500.

listed as *Côte-des-neiges de Montréal*, and the names of both spouses' parents were omitted. At the time of his burial on May 10, 1809, in St. Léon le Grand, Maskinongé, he was listed as age 75, and his occupation as *charron* [wheelwright].¹²

Louise Beaulieu, also known as Marie Louise Thérèse Bertrand Beaulieu,¹³ was a little more difficult to track after the Excommunication. She was Thérèse Bertrand, daughter of Gilles Joseph Bertrand *dit* Beaulieu and Louise Thérèse Trouillet *dite* LaJeunesse, who married Jacques Godrou (*sic*) [Gaudreau], son of Gabriel Gaudreau and Marie Angélique Baudoin on February 27, 1781, at *L'Assomption de la Pointe de Montréal de Détroit*.^{14 15 16} I have been unable to find any further information regarding Louise Beaulieu. Jacques Gaudreau was buried on March 8, 1813, in the cemetery of Assumption Sandwich. There was no mention of his wife.

To be continued.

Ancestral Chart of Loraine Treas DiCerbo
Submitted by Loraine DiCerbo, FCHSM member (lorainedicerbo@yahoo.com)

I	Louis Gonzague Deshêtres <i>dit</i> Pigeon (Antoine/Charlotte Chevalier)		Marie Louise Thérèse Bertrand-Beaulieu (Gilles /Louise Thérèse Trouillet-LaJeunesse)
II	Louis de Gonzague Deshêtres (Louis/Louise Bertrand Beaulieu)	21 January 1800 Ste-Anne-de-Détroit	Marie Catherine Greffard (Louis/Marguerite Casse-St. Aubin)
III	Marie Esther Deshêtres (Louis/Marie Catherine Greffard)	3 November 1819 Ste-Anne-de-Détroit	Étienne Blait (François/Madeleine Lacaille)
IV	Antoine Blay (Étienne/ Marie Esther Deshêtres)	Before 1845	Teresa Matt (Léon/Félicité Charon)
V	Jane Blay (Antoine/Teresa Matt)	19 May 1861 Mt. Clemens, MI	Christopher Keidel (Andrew/Philomene Tupfer)
VI	Julianna Keidel (Christopher/Jane Blay)	21 November 1890 Mt. Clemens, MI	August B. Miller (Peter Miller/Martina Boldt)
VII	Lillian Martina Miller (August/Julianna Keidel)	19 May 1917 Mt. Clemens, MI	Robert James Jump (James/Clara B.L. Flexman)
VIII	Eleanor Margaret Jump (Robert/Clara B.L. Flexman)	28 December 1942 Detroit, MI	Albert Treas (Johnnie/Vera Ivey)
IX	Gerald Albert Treas (Albert/ Eleanor M. Jump)	30 April 1966 Roseville, MI	Barbara Ann (Mikulik) McCall (Fred/Mary Nazarchuk)
X	Loraine Mary Treas (Gerald/Barbara McCall)	17 May 1997 Detroit, MI	John Andrew DiCerbo (Alphonso/Rosemarie Pilkington)

¹² PRDH Burial Record #1168266.

¹³ PRDH Baptismal Record #123224. Baptism at Laprairie, not Boucherville as Father Bocquet reports.

¹⁴ PRDH Couple Record #89317.

¹⁵ Copy of the names of the contracting parties and of the dates of the marriages celebrated at the Church of the Assumption, "La Pointe de Montreal du Detroit" (Sandwich), 1760-1781. <http://my.tbaytel.net/bmartin/detroit1.htm>

¹⁶ PRDH Marriage Record #312829.